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A BOOK OF VERSES FOR CHILDREN.
WHAT SHALL WE DO NOW? A Nursery
Baedeker.
THE FLAMP, AND OTHER STORIES.

DOMESTICITIES

A Little Book of
Household Impressions

BY

E. V. LUCAS

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO.
15 WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.
MDCCCC

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Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
At the Ballantyne Press

PR
6023
L96d

To
M. C. G. J.

*In gratitude ; yet with apology
For offering a book which seems to me
So very far from what it ought to be.*

*Because all books, I think, should manifest
Their author's self, complete, north, south, east, west ;
And here so much of me seems unexpressed :*

*Not great (Heaven knows !) nor curiously fine,
Nor aught, may be, to help a single line,
Yet certain things more intimately mine.*

*Still, lacking these, I beg to give it you,—
One of the kindest friends man ever knew.
Perchance, in reading, you'll deduce a few.*

E. V. L.

September 15, 1900.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
CONCERNING TOAST	I
CONCERNING BREAKFAST	17
CONCERNING WALKS	31
CONCERNING TEA	45
CONCERNING SCHOOL-HAMPERS	57
CONCERNING CATALOGUES	69
CONCERNING CLOTHES	87
CONCERNING FIRES	99
CONCERNING CORRESPONDENCE	113
CONCERNING ANIMALS	131
CONCERNING THE MISERIES OF LIFE	147
CONCERNING A GENTLE ADVISER	173

Concerning Toast

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DOMESTICITIES

Concerning Toast

IF bread is the staff of life, toast is its clouded cane. The cheapest of the luxuries, and withal one of the most exquisite and enduring, to set but a low value upon toast is to expose one's deficiency in right appreciation.

"To make dry toast properly," says the admirable Mrs. Beeton, "a great deal of attention is required; much more indeed than people generally suppose. Never use new bread for making any kind of toast, as it renders it heavy, and, besides, is very extravagant." A loaf one day old is the best material. Mrs. Beeton continues: "Dry toast should be more gradually made than buttered toast, as its great beauty consists in its crispness, and this cannot be attained unless the process is slow, and the

bread is allowed gradually to colour." Dry toast, one might add, should be thin as well as crisp. It should be eaten within, at the most, ten minutes of leaving the fire. While awaiting its turn on the table, each piece of toast should stand alone, on no account being laid flat or placed so close to another piece that it touches. Stale toast, or toast from which the crispness has, as it were, thawed away, is abomination. It is limp, and tough, and indigent. Moreover, the mastication of it makes no sound. Now the noise from good toast should reverberate in the head like the thunder of July.

The *Spectator*, which has ever been an exponent of the art of living, laid down, more than thirty years ago, rules concerning toast. "True toast," it then said (or, to be exact, the late Mr. R. H. Hutton then said), "is classical—severe. . . . Toast, we need not say, should be *thin*, crisp, wafer-like, as well as embrowned, fresh and hot. Thick toast with solid fleshy bread between the embrowned surfaces is a gross and plebeian solecism; for the true intention of toast, its meaning or *raison d'être*, is to extinguish the foody, solid taste which belongs

to bread, and to supply in its place crisp, light, fragrant, evanescent, spiritualised chips of fare, the mere scent and sound of which suggest the crisp, pleasant, light chat of easy morning or evening conversation." The *Spectator's* enthusiasm is noble, but one begs to differ slightly. Dogmatist replying to dogmatist would contest the point touching the thoroughness of the toasting process. Toast should *not* be wafer-like, nor crisp *throughout*. On the contrary, it should be cut just thick enough to leave in its very inward midst the merest tissue of soft bread, if only by way of compliment to the butter spread upon it, which thereby gains in flavour. Toast, when it is a "chip," dry enough to snap, is too dry. This central layer of soft bread lends it unity and preserves enough moisture to influence the whole. When the original bread intervening between the toasted surfaces is more than a mere hint, then indeed has the toaster failed with ignominy. "That," as the *Spectator* says, "is an anomaly, like dancing in thin boots surmounted with heavy gaiters."

Toast is one of the few delicacies that can be made better by the amateur than the professional,

and as well by a man as by a woman. Cooks treat toast perfunctorily: it does not interest them. Indeed, toast might well be kept strictly to amateur ambition. For several reasons: one being that its fragrance is pleasant in a sitting-room; another, that making it is an agreeable diversion; and a third, that whereas bad toast produced in the kitchen leads to annoyance and irritation, bad toast produced by a guest or a member of the family makes for mock abuse, sham penitence, and good humour.

Just as every man believes himself to be excelled by no one in arousing a dying fire, so does every man believe himself to be the finest hand in the world at making toast. That the first conspicuous failure as a maker of toast was Alfred the Great is the one glowing historical fact which is common to all grades of intellect. It is as familiar to the night-school pupil in Whitechapel as it was to the late Professor Freeman. To burn toast is still a prevalent delinquency: there are some absent-minded creatures who are always to be caught resting the bread against the bars. Blackened toast is not nice; but compared with the sin of smoking it, blackening toast is a bagatelle. Burnt toast

can be scraped and rendered passable, but by no means can toast be cleansed of smoke.

The best toast is made with a toasting-fork, and the good, the complete, toaster is known by the way in which he places the bread upon the prongs.¹ An immature, illogical toaster affixes it at a right angle and confronts the fire squarely. This is unwise, since there follows equatorial heat. The scientific toaster arranges the bread so that he is enabled to sit out of the line of heat and yet present the full surface to the bars. When the toasting-fork is missing, or already in use, a table fork is sometimes employed. After toasting with a table fork for

¹ Toasting-forks have other uses. One of these is illustrated in a letter of Charles Dickens to the late James T. Fields, the American publisher. Dickens wrote : "I dreamed that somebody was dead. It was a private gentleman, and a particular friend ; and I was greatly overcome when the news was broken to me (very delicately) by a gentleman in a cocked hat, top boots, and a sheet. Nothing else. 'Good God !' I said, 'is he dead?' 'He is as dead, sir,' rejoined the gentleman, 'as a door-nail. But we must all die, Mr. Dickens, sooner or later, my dear sir.' 'Ah !' I said, 'yes, to be sure. Very true. But what did he die of?' The gentleman burst into a flood of tears, and said, in a voice broken by emotion, 'He christened his youngest child, sir, with a toasting-fork !'"

a minute or so, one's hand knows exactly how Tom Brown must have felt when Bully Flashman held him to the fire.¹

In some houses a toasting apparatus is in use, but toast thus prepared lacks individuality. It may, perhaps, be embrowned more evenly, but the human element is lacking. In restaurants and clubs toast is always prepared in a rack, and in spite of the means employed, clubs have always good toast. Some club-men leave wife and child and home, and seek Pall Mall, less for the company, the whist, or the cellar, than for the toast to be obtained there, such is its fascination. Hotels, too, have usually good toast, but the supply is seldom sufficient: hence the order of an experienced traveller when breakfasting at an inn, "Waiter, be perpetually bringing up fresh toast." The best

¹ There is in English literature, by the way, a much earlier reference to the same practice. The first eclogue of another Browne—William Browne, author of "The Shepherd's Pipe"—which is otherwise a simple, idyllic poem, contains this cannibalistic passage:

"I will sing what I did heere
Long ago in Janiveere,
Of a skilful aged sire,
As we tosted by the fire."

accompaniment to toast is butter, which should not be spread over the piece, but applied to each mouthful in turn. Toast elicits the essential virtues of butter more successfully even than bread ; so much so, that one might almost say that violence is committed when marmalade is allied to it, or meat paste.

To hot-buttered toast butter is absolutely the only accompaniment ; the more butter the better. And here the breach widens between the *Spectator* and a writer who would fain quarrel with no one. "It is impossible," thunders the Wellington Street arbiter, "to conceive a more horrible degradation of a great idea than buttered toast is of toast. Every great quality of toast is turned into its opposite and contradictory in buttered toast—lightness into heaviness, crispness into swashy flabbiness, fragrance into a sort of brooding butter-malaria, a Pontine marsh of butter. . . . Buttered toast is the Pickwick's fat-boy of victuals." True. But, granting all this, does not a singularly seductive food remain? Toast and buttered toast are as distinct as the race-horse and the cart-horse ; and both alike are admirable, each in its own way.

Different persons favour different shapes in hot-buttered toast. Some cut triangular pieces, others square; some divide the slice into four, others into two. This is a matter of personal predilection, but positive sin is committed when the crusts are not cut off. "Likeways, a few rounds o' buttered toast," said Mrs. Gamp, giving orders for tea to Jonas Chuzzlewit's servant, "first cuttin' off the crusts, in consequence of tender teeth, and not too many of 'em; which Gamp himself, Mrs. Chuzzlewit, at one blow, being in liquor, struck out four, two single and two double, as was took by Mrs. Harris for a keepsake, and is carried in her pocket at this present hour, along with two cramp-bones, a bit o' ginger, and a grater like a blessed infant's shoe in tin, with a little heel to put the nutmeg in." It is, says Alexis Soyer, wicked to cut through half-a-dozen buttered slices at once, because when that is done the butter is squeezed from the upper pieces, while the bottom one is swimming in it. Among the initiated (or, as the *Spectator* would have it, the vulgar) there is, under these circumstances, a struggle for the bottom piece. Each slice should, on the contrary,

be cut separately and laid lightly on the dish.

Buttered toast should be thicker than cold toast, and the butter should drench. It thus becomes gloriously indigestible : as a dyspeptic influence removed but one degree from the muffin. It is the crumpet, however, that holds the historical record. “ ‘One night,’ said Mr. Weller, “he wos took very ill ; sends for a doctor ; doctor comes in a green fly, with a kind o’ Robinson Crusoe set o’ steps, as he could let down ven he got out, and pull up arter him ven he got in, to perwent the necessity o’ the coachman’s gettin’ down, and thereby undeceivin’ the public by lettin’ ’em see that it vos only a livery coat he’d got on, and not the trousers to match.’ ‘Wot’s the matter?’ says the doctor. ‘Wery ill,’ says the patient. ‘Wot have you been a eatin’ on?’ says the doctor. ‘Roast weal,’ says the patient. ‘Wot’s the last thing you dewoured?’ says the doctor. ‘Crumpets,’ says the patient. ‘That’s it,’ says the doctor. ‘I’ll send you a box of pills directly, and don’t you never take no more of ’em,’ he says. ‘No more o’ wot?’ says the patient— ‘Pills?’ ‘No ; crumpets,’ says the doctor.

'Wy?' says the patient, starting up in bed; 'I've eat four crumpets ev'ry night for fifteen year, on principle.' 'Well, then, you'd better leave 'em off, on principle,' says the doctor. 'Crumpets is wholesome, sir,' says the patient. 'Crumpets is *not* wholesome, sir,' says the doctor, wery fierce. 'But they're so cheap,' says the patient, comin' down a little, 'and so wery fillin' at the price.' 'They'd be dear to you at any price; dear if you wos paid to eat 'em,' says the doctor. 'Four crumpets a night,' he says, 'vill do your business in six months!' The patient looks him full in the face, and turns it over in his mind for a long time, and at last he says, 'Are you sure o' that 'ere, sir?' 'I'll stake my professional reputation on it,' says the doctor. 'How many crumpets, at a sittin', do you think, 'ud kill me off at once?' says the patient. 'I don't know,' says the doctor. 'Do you think half a crown's vurth 'ud do it?' says the patient. 'I think it might,' says the doctor. 'Three shillin's vurth 'ud be sure to do it, I s'pose?' says the patient. 'Certainly,' says the doctor. 'Wery good,' says the patient; 'good-night.' Next mornin' he gets up, has a fire lit, orders in three shillin's vurth o' crum-

pets, toasts 'em all, eats 'em all, and blows his brains out.'

" 'What did he do that for?' inquired Mr. Pickwick abruptly; for he was considerably startled by this tragical termination of the narrative.

" 'Wot did he do it for, sir?' reiterated Sam. 'Vy, in support of his great principle that crumpets wos wholesome, and to show that he couldn't be put out of his way for nobody!'"

The most famous hot-buttered toast house in the world was "Tyson's Restaurant" in Rook Street, Manchester, which still flourishes but is no longer animated by the crisp individuality of its founder, old Tom Tyson, as he was known. Tyson, a born autocrat, knew that in their heart of hearts Britons, for all their Rule Britannia sentiments, like to be slave-driven. So he established a restaurant wherein he, an inflexible tyrant, might enforce laws of his own making and win riches by this very enforcement. He provided only chops, steaks, and Cumberland ham, and served with them, instead of vegetables, hot-buttered toast or bread. Most of his customers took toast. People who asked for potatoes were unceremoniously told that

they should have brought their own. Every one who ate at Tyson's was compelled also to drink. Ale, stout, coffee, and tea were the only liquids. A customer asking for water was referred to the "teetotal shop next door."

A host of good stories are told of Tyson. He dominated the place in his shirt-sleeves, and nothing escaped his vigilant eye. His duty to a customer, as he conceived it, was done when good food had been laid promptly before him; after that the customer's duty to the master of the restaurant began. Reading was not permitted, at least in the middle of the day, nor grumbling, nor a protracted sitting, nor smoking. Tyson's strength was the excellence of his wares, his cheapness, and his business-like despatch, and knowing this he played the Kaiser to the top of his bent. A young man once calling, "Waiter, bring me a steak at once," was amazed to find a raw steak clapped on the table before him. To his expression of disgust came the reply, "You can't expect meat to be cooked if you want it at once." Another customer had the temerity to complain that his steak was tough. A considerable space of time elapsed before he came

again, but Tyson, who forgot nothing, was waiting for him. The grumbler called for a steak. "Steaks are tough," was the reply. "Then I'll have a chop." "Chops are tough." "Then what can I have?" "Nothing. If you can't be satisfied with food that pleases other people you can go somewhere else." A customer daring so much as to glance at a letter from his pocket was curtly informed that "this is not a library." A customer who had exceeded his welcome was bidden to go. To the few who complained of incivility, Tyson's reply was that he served his civility with his chops and steaks. A branch of Tyson's was opened in London, near St. Paul's, but, possibly through lack of its originator's truculent yet attractive presence, it soon ceased to be.

Yet there is room for toast-houses. Who knows but that the establishment of a good toast-house might not restore the days of wit? In course of time, if the toast-house became as notable as Will's Coffee-house of old, another John Dryden or Dr. Johnson might be forthcoming to dominate it; and we need another Dr. Johnson. The experiment, at any rate, might be tried.

Toast is more than a delicacy: it is a friend, a sick-room ally. Toast-and-water is cooling as the wind of the morning across fields of dew, and it is toast, swimming in beef tea, that constitutes the first solid food which a patient may take. In the nursery and at school toast is a recognised concomitant of an invalid's tea, and many a boy has shammed illness to achieve it. Otherwise schoolboys have few opportunities of tasting this luxury, toast made over a gas-jet being a very inferior article. A gas-jet, however, has been known to embrown cheese very pleasantly, and here one might put a question that for too long has been a cause of vexation: Why is "Toasted Cheese" a less honourable nickname than "Candle Ends"? It will be remembered by students of "The Hunting of the Snark," that the baker, having no fixed name, was called by his intimate friends Candle Ends, and by his enemies Toasted Cheese. To the ordinary non-Carrollian mind it would seem that more of a compliment, more of affection, was carried by the name chosen by the baker's enemies.

Concerning Breakfast

Concerning Breakfast

HOUSES where every one is punctual for breakfast are not good to stay in : the virtues so flourish there. A little laxity in the morning is humanising. For dinner, punctuality by all means, punctuality severely to the minute ; but for breakfast let there be liberty to tarry on the way. To be late for breakfast is so natural an act that instinctively one feels it to be right. There is a kind of half-wakeful sleep following the precarious folding of the hands to which the Comfortable resort when they are first called, that is more precious than all the deep somnolence of the night. The old poet knew. How runs his wisdom ?—

“ When the Morning riseth red,
Rise not thou, but keep thy Bed ;
When the Dawn is dull and gray,
Sleep is still the better way.
Beasts are up betimes ? But then
They are Beasts, and we are men.”

And—

“Morning Sleep avoideth Broil,
Wasteth not in greedy Toil,
Doth not suffer Care or Grief,
Giveth aching Bones relief.
Of all the Crimes beneath the Sun,
Say, Which in morning Sleep was done?”

Yet breakfast in bed is not the joy some persons would have us think it. There are crumbs.

The breakfast appetite varies strangely. Some persons are content with a cup of coffee and a piece of toast; others make it the most determined meal of the day. Once it was formidable indeed. In Sir John Hawkins's "History of Music" is quoted a sixteenth-century manuscript belonging to the House of Northumberland, which gives the breakfast arrangements of the Percy family both for Lent and for flesh days; and oh, how some of us have fallen away in trencher work! Here is the simple Northumbrian scheme: "Breakfast for my Lord and Lady during Lent—First, a loaf of bread in trenchers, 2 manchets [a manchet was a small loaf of white bread], a quart of beer, a quart of wine, 2 pieces of salt fish, 6 baconn'd

herring, 4 white herring, or a dish of sprats. Breakfast for my Lord Percy and Master Thomas Percy—Item, half a loaf of household bread, a manchet, a bottle of beer, a dish of butter, and a piece of salt fish, a dish of sprats, or three white herring. Breakfast for the nursery, for my Lady Margaret and Master Ingeram Percy—Item, a manchet, a quart of beer [this for the nursery!], a dish of butter, a piece of salt fish, a dish of sprats, or three white herring.” At ordinary times my Lord and Lady fared thus: “First, a loaf of bread in trenchers, 2 manchets, a quart of beer, a quart of wine, half a chine of mutton, or else a chine of beef boiled;” Lord Percy and Master Thomas Percy disposed of “half a loaf of household bread, a manchet, 1 bottle of beer, a cheeking, or else 3 mutton bones boiled;” while to the thirsty nursery went “a manchet, 1 quart of beer, and three mutton bones boiled.”

In Hall’s “Seventh Year of King Henry VIII.” we find what constituted the breakfast of outlaws. “Then sayde Robyn Hood, Sir, outlawes brekefaste is venyson, and therefore you must be content with suche fare as we use. Then the Kyng and Quene sate downe, and

were served with venyson and wyne by Robyn Hood and hys men, to theyre great contentacion.” “Contentacion” is a splendid word; it might be reserved for red-letter breakfasts. Izaak Walton and his honest scholar made brave breakfast of a piece of powdered beef and a radish or two, as they sat beneath a sycamore. Considering that this was at nine o’clock and they began fishing soon after five, they deserved it. “All excellent good,” said the honest scholar as he wiped his mouth, “and my stomach excellent good too.” Walton’s collaborator, Master Charles Cotton, was less indulgent. “My diet,” he said, “is always one glass [of ale] so soon as I am dressed, and no more till dinner,” which, compared with the excesses of the Percy children, is asceticism itself. Viator, in the same work, took even less. “I will light a pipe,” he said, “for that is commonly my breakfast too.” Viator, however, was misguided. Had he eaten breakfast first and lighted his pipe after, his lot would have been more enviable. No pipe is so gracious as that which follows breakfast. Calverley sinned when he omitted this season from his ode to tobacco. “Sweet when they’ve

cleared away lunch," he sings. True ; but sweeter, nay, sweetest, when they are clearing away breakfast.

To the child breakfast means bread and milk, or porridge, and the beginning of another day. To me it meant this and nothing more until at an early age a reading-book was embarked upon, which consisted of a long dialogue between father and children concerning the nature and the source of the articles upon the breakfast table. The conversation, which was continued through several breakfasts, proceeded in the manner of the catechism. One child asked where coffee came from, and papa replied that it came from Arabia. Another was struck by the whiteness of the salt, and said so. Papa at once explained the whiteness of the salt and passed easily to a lecture on salt-mining. The aim of the book was to show that the antipodal peoples of the earth meet at the breakfast table; that energy must be expended in both hemispheres before Henry and Susan can enjoy their bread and treacle. This reading-book was epoch-making. Henceforward breakfast was an educative meal ; and I have only quite lately lost the feeling that at any moment a

searching question might be asked concerning the origin and manufacture of everything eaten. From the children's books of to-day, it might be noted, the well-informed parent is departing.

Oatmeal marks not only the child's breakfast, it is the favourite food of Edinburgh Reviewers. Thus do extremes meet. It is best with cream, which indeed might be defined, after a well-known model, as the stuff which makes porridge insipid if you eat it without it. If the hoardings are to be believed, the form of porridge now most in vogue is of Quaker origin. Quaker oats, one supposes, should be the very antithesis of wild oats. Porridge—homely, honest fare though it be—is the cause of more strife than any other dish. The great salt *versus* sugar battle is eternally waged above it; for some take salt and some sugar, and they that take salt are the scorn of those that take sugar, and they that take sugar are despised of those that take salt. Quakers being a pacific folk, their oats should have stopped this warfare.

The egg, as egg, belongs properly to the breakfast table, in spite of the beautiful anthropomorphic story (which too many parents claim to have participated in) of the little girl who

asked her mother what God has for dinner. "God," said her mother, "has no dinner." The little girl was for a moment silent, thoughtful, sad. Then she brightened: "Oh, I suppose He has an egg with His tea." In a poem in praise of frugality his Holiness the Pope lays down this rule (which reaches English readers *viâ* Mr. Andrew Lang)—

"Fresh be thine eggs, hard-boiled, or nearly raw,
Or deftly poached, or simply served *au plat* ;
' There's wit in poaching eggs,' the proverb says,
And you may do them in a hundred ways."

Buttered they give, perhaps, most "contentacion."

Personally, I like to begin the day's eating with watercress. It is so sharp and awakening. Indeed, to show to fullest advantage, to scintillate as Nature intended it to, it is at breakfast that watercress must be eaten, newly picked, with salt and bread-and-butter. The bread must be white and new, and the butter mild and fresh. The ecstasy of the surprise of watercress to the palate and tongue! The lively pricking sensation of the mustard-like sharpness, the fragrance of the sap, and, above all, the cleanness, the good-humoured, bright cleanness of the herb! Watercress, if it tastes

of anything, tastes of early morning in spring. It is eloquent of the charm of its native environment. Nothing else—lettuce, radishes, cucumber, land cress, or celery—speaks or sings to the eater, as watercress does, of cool streams and overhanging banks and lush herbage. The watercress has for neighbours the water-lily, the marsh marigold, and the forget-me-not. The spirit of the rivulet abides in its heart.

No matter of what the breakfast consists, marmalade is the coping-stone of the meal. Without marmalade the finest breakfast is incomplete, a broken arc. Only with marmalade can it be a perfect round. Every one's home-made marmalade is notoriously the best; but where the commercially-manufactured article is used opinions differ. Her Most Gracious Majesty (it is stated so on the pot) prefers a viscous variety which is impossible to Oxford men bred on Cooper's. Tess of the D'Urber-illes, it will be remembered, favoured Keelwell's; or, at any rate, it was this maker who assisted in the embellishment of little Sorrow's grave. The Universities are nobly loyal to marmalade. At Cambridge there is a saying

that no man can pass his Little-go until he has consumed his own weight in it, while Oxford first called it Squish. The attitude of women to marmalade has never been quite sound. True, they make it excellently, but afterwards their association with it is one lamentable retrogression. They spread it over pastry; they do not particularly desire it at breakfast; and (worst) they decant it into glass dishes and fancy jars.

Where there is no marmalade, shift may be made with honey or jam; and treacle is not entirely out of favour, although the enterprise of Bonnie Dundee has dealt it so hard a blow that you may fare far in your quest of the golden syrup. The great charm of treacle is in its transit from the pot to the plate; with no other liquid, except the exquisite thin honey of Switzerland, is it possible to trace one's autograph. Most of us as children saw our names writ in treacle.

Breakfast is a meal at which one becomes apiarian. Everything being on the table, or on the sideboard, one can sip, bee-like, where one will; hence, perhaps, the absence of conversation at breakfast. At dinner, where formality is preserved, where one progresses

artistically and with dignity towards repletion, conversation is fostered; at breakfast there is merely chatter, sporadic and trivial; scraps from letters, puns, dreams, and the description of strange noises heard in the night. Dreams told at breakfast should be accepted with reservations, for few persons are strong enough to tell them faithfully. Yet, although breakfast does little either for the conversationalist or the gourmet, it is often the merriest and freshest of the day's meals. The joy of it is new every morning. Breakfast is the beginning of another day: lunch and dinner are but continuations; and to those glad natures which are reinvigorated and heartened by every sunrise breakfast is a time for high spirits. High spirits, however, must not be confounded with brilliance. Only dull people, said a character in a recent comedy, are brilliant at breakfast; which is a truth, in spite of the works of Dr. Holmes and the records which have come down to us of the scintillating breakfast-parties given by Samuel Rogers and Lord Holland. But the table which in those days was set in a roar approximated more nearly to the luncheon-table than the breakfast-table as we understand.

it. Breakfast-parties are indeed practically obsolete.¹ At the ordinary breakfast-table there is little wit. One reason is the early hour—wit is for the day's decline ; another is discontent—bed is not yet forgotten, nor the breakfast-gong forgiven, and wit requires a mind at ease.

¹ The following remark of Macaulay to Mrs. Stowe thus loses point, and this point is not restored by reading lunch for breakfast, for the old breakfast does not quite take the place of modern lunch : "You invite a man to dinner because you *must* invite him ; because you are acquainted with his grandfather, or it is proper you should ; but you invite a man to breakfast because you want to see *him*. You may be sure if you are invited to breakfast, there is something agreeable about you."

Concerning Walks



Concerning Walks

AFTER all, choosing a walking-stick is a serious business. A cane can be selected lightly enough, for a cane is a mere town acquaintance; but a walking-stick is a country friend, a roadside companion, a support, a solace, perhaps a defender. Therefore it behoves one to be careful in deciding. Moreover, a walking-stick should endure: one does not want to change it before the necessary end; and a good walking-stick is one of the things of which one never tires but grows ever more fond, familiarity breeding no contempt, nothing but increased satisfaction. Now a cane—a cane may be an affair of caprice: you may have a dozen and alternate them like neck-ties; but a walking-stick is unalterable. You stand by him and he stands by you; he is, as I have said, your friend.

Personally, I incline to a cherry. I have carried my present cherry for a good five years, and his predecessor (broken at stump cricket) was a cherry too. This is the best I have yet

owned because it fulfils the requirements. That is to say, it is strong and leanable upon, it tapers, and its handle, which of course is natural, is set at a slightly obtuse angle. I was taught the last important qualification by the finest foot-traveller in Sussex, a man (he is now above eighty but still active) who knows every inch of that inaccessible and alluring county, and has known it since he was a boy. He cuts his own sticks, preferring ground ash, and, since he cannot find it in his heart to pass a likely one by when it catches his eye as he swings through a copse, his sumptuary stock is immense. All have obtuse-angled handles. The reason is that for down hill work (when a stick is most useful) the support for the hand is the fullest. All also have very large handles, for the same reason. A little while ago I had a valuable corroboration of this theory from another old man, whom I found cutting the grass on a grave in the churchyard. Beside him lay a crutch and a walking-stick with a handle — obtuse-angled — of enormous size. "I've had that stick many a year," he said. "The handle? Oh yes, he is a big one; but if he hadn't been big he wouldn't have been

any good to me, crippled as I am." Your old countryman makes no mistakes in such matters.

In real walking a handle of this character is imperative. Not that a right-angled handle is an obstacle, but try the other for a while and you will see its comfort and utility. A crook is useless save as a hook for berries and nuts, and a knob contracts the hand. One of the sad things is that holly, that superb wood, cannot grow a good handle, nor can you often find a blackthorn that succeeds in doing so. Good cherry sticks are rare ; for the most part they lack balance. Hazels are light and strong, but their handles are cross-grained and are therefore put out of court. The ground ash, perhaps, comes oftenest to the point of satisfaction.

Where, one wonders, are the old walking-sticks? Where are George Borrow's sticks? He must have had noble fellows. Time should have no power over a stick lying at ease ; the sticks of great men should last for ever in a museum. I think I must begin to collect them. Where is that wonderful stick of Coleridge's, which, when a young man, walking in Wales, he lost, and advertised for so piquantly? This

is how the notice, which was called through the town by the crier, was couched—

“Missing from the Bee Inn, Abergele, a curious walking-stick. On one side it displays the head of an eagle, the eyes of which represent rising suns, and the ears Turkish crescent ; on the other side is the portrait of the owner in woodwork. Beneath the head of the eagle is a Welsh wig, and around the neck of the stick is a Queen Elizabeth’s ruff in tin. All down it waves the line of beauty in very ugly carving. If any gentleman (or lady) has fallen in love with the above described stick, and secretly carried off the same, he (or she) is hereby earnestly admonished to conquer a passion the continuance of which must prove fatal to his (or her) honesty. And if the said stick has slipped into such gentleman’s (or lady’s) hand through inadvertence, he (or she) is required to rectify the mistake with all convenient speed. God save the King.”

Coleridge recovered the stick from the old gentleman who had innocently taken it, and who, grasping it firmly, returned to the inn in confusion followed by half the town. The stick, it seems, was, properly speaking, a staff, such as patriarchs carry in old Bible prints, for it measured five feet. For hill-work these staffs are better than any walking-stick of ordinary length ; they pull one upwards.

Coleridge bought it from a countryman, and his sudden affection for it, he says in a letter, "mellowed into settled friendship." That is as it should be with all good sticks; we should feel for them (and they for us) settled friendship.

To have one of these good sticks, nothing to do, no cares, no thought for the morrow, a good pair of boots, a sufficient purse, a light knapsack, a weather-proof coat, and to be in a heathery country with no more purpose in life than to follow whatever footpaths one will until come night and the inn—that is no bad state. Indeed, it is an ideal of happiness. For the last couple of weeks in April or the first in May one could be as happy thus employed (or unemployed) as any way you could suggest. Later, the skies are not so interesting, having too much blue and too little cloud; the birds have done with nesting and have therefore cut off from the rover the additional pleasure of looking for their eggs; and later also, the heat begins. Now for the desultory walker a blend of hot or cold, or rather, warmth and freshness, is important, and a showery day he will welcome. To be rained upon and sunned upon in one walk

is to be in Nature's good books. She extends the privilege only rarely. That is why April or May is the ideal time.

The catalogue of necessities which I have just dogmatically given may be modified a little without serious injury to the ideal. Thus, thought for the morrow may be present now and then, but fugitively ; the knapsack may go altogether, its only value (and one that compensates the owner for the irksomeness of carrying it) being that it predicates a romantic uncertainty about where the night is going to be spent ; the heather is a mere matter of taste. But the footpath clause is unassailable ; I cannot let that go. It is because all my life I have been baulked of accepting the invitation of this footpath and that, that I included it in the scheme at all, and it must not be expunged.

To be able to follow whatever footpath one will is the very heart of the game. The other morning I walked into the town to meet a visitor. Having only just enough time I stepped out briskly ; but the sense of duty in my punctual head never reached my feet at all. No sooner did a little footpath cross my track than I found them wavering that way : it was all I could do

to make them reasonable ; rebellion inhabited every nail, rank anarchy was enthroned upon both uppers. I got them to the town at last, but I was exhausted. The worst of it is that my sympathies were with them all the while, and nothing but necessity saved me from giving way. My head was adamant, but, as the saying is, my heart was in my boots. Is it not in Hans Andersen that a bewitched pair of shoes carry their wearer into peril ? The idea is one for a writer like Mr. Anstey. I can see the synopsis as I write :—A diabolical cobbler settles in the village and soles-and-heels the villagers with magic leather ; everything goes askew ; the Vicar is irresistibly borne into the public-house and held fast against the bar ; the publican is propelled to the most conspicuous pew ; the profoundest of the old maids is found steering a bee-line course of terrible velocity for the front door of the most inveterate of the bachelors, and nothing can stop her ; while a poor country recluse, who ought to be doing his daily work, is brought to penury and unfruitfulness by an inability to resist the seductive call of footpaths. That's me, as grammarians try not to say. I really must speak to our cobbler.

But how seductive this call of the footpath is! However delightful the path you are at the moment treading may be, the next one always seems to promise a shade more of beauty or mystery. You see it fading away over the ridge, and the temptation to learn what happens after is intense. The fact that a footpath always goes somewhere is one of its charms, and to conjecture where a footpath goes is not the least pleasure of a country walk. "I expect it leads to that farm," says one. "No, I think it hits the road over there, and just cuts off this corner," says another. "Why shouldn't it be the path to —?" asks the third; and in the end there is nothing to do but try it. So are good rambles compassed.

Not that the open road is to be slighted. There it is, broad and white and hard; but the open road has no subtleties. Now a footpath is of a shy, retiring character, with unexpected turns and twists, dips and elevations, with unlooked for shade and sun. Its voice is low, beside the clarion call of the open road; but it is very sweet. The footpath is, in a way, more human than the road. To a certain extent a footpath is also a protest against the road.

Being wayward itself, vagrom, capricious, its appeal is to the traveller whose sympathies are with those characteristics. The open road cries to a blunter, a more direct mind.

It is a fine thing to begin a footpath. Any one may have this honour by accident ; but few of us can knowingly lay claim to it. I have assisted, however, to maintain a right-of-way by stamping up and down it to emphasise the apparent importance of the track ; and my old Sussex friend with the good taste in walking-sticks once spent a whole night in the same noble occupation. That is true zeal.

In a hilly country the most satisfying rests that come are those taken leaning on a gate. To see a view properly one must be still, and one can be very still leaning on a gate. The body reposes while the eyes work. Last summer I walked along a hill in Kent, over a common. This common was on the top of the hill, and the roadway ran over the turf parallel with the line of the range and about a hundred yards from the summit, all along—say for half a mile. On the lower side of this roadway—a footpath enclosed by old ruts would be the more exact description—was a hedge, also run-

ning all the way along ; and this hedge served as so complete a barrier to the view that a wayfarer plumped suddenly down on this path could be quite unaware that he was five hundred feet above the sea level. On the one hand he would see the common, just then a blaze of gold gorse bushes backed by sombre heather, with a plover wheeling and tumbling in the sky above it ; and on the other, nothing but the tender green of the beech trees, which, twisted and gnarled under the restraining influence of the hand-bill, made as impenetrable a screen as the most sensitive recluse or misanthrope could need. As I have said, the wayfarer would have been quite unaware that he was five hundred feet above the sea level.

Except at the gates ! For in this hedge were three gates, and those gates opened on to three counties—Kent and Surrey and Sussex. To come unexpectedly on one of them was the suddenest thing ! One stood still and the world was merely sky and hedge and a strip of common ; a single step and two hundred square miles lay beneath me. And such square miles ! —soft and peaceful, made domestic and kindly by comfortably-rounded oaks and red roofs and

the gentle whiteness of oast vanes. That for the foreground; farther were the hills, a faint misty purple, like the bloom on a plum. And all this spread out for the quiet eye by a five-barred gate!

I remember meeting with the same effect—the same unlocking of a view by a gate—on a piece of the Pilgrim's Way, just out of Guildford, before Newland's Corner is reached. The view there is not so ample: Martha's Chapel takes up so much of it; but the suddenness is the same, and a gate plays the same part. But the suddenest experience in views that was ever mine was gathered in Italy. Some fifteen miles south of Genoa, on the Ligurian coast, is a little seaport named Santa Margherita. High on a ridge of the Apennines, above Santa Margherita, is the village of Ruta. The road from Santa Margherita to Ruta climbs the hills inland: there is nothing to see in the distance but peak on peak, valley after valley, and, near at hand, villas, vineyards, white bell-towers, olive groves. And then, at Ruta, the road runs through a tunnel cut through the rock, and you pass from this grey-green world through a momentary blackness into full view

of the blue gulf of Genoa, the distant Alpes Maritimes, snow-clad and dazzling, the seething city of Genoa, and, nearer to your feet, Camogli and Nervi. It is so sudden as to make one wince, almost as though a white bird flew in one's face. But only for an instant. Thereafter are supreme content and rest—the satisfied sense that can come only when one reclines on a high hill, gazing at a murmuring plain.

Concerning Tea

Concerning Tea

THE origin of tea, according to tradition, is as simple as it is credible. Prince Darma, in the remote ages, was a holy Asiatic who spent day and night in meditations upon the Infinite. One night his ecstasy was interrupted by sleep. On awaking he was so dismayed at his infirmity that he tore off his eyelids and flung them on the ground. The spectacle of a holy Asiatic flinging his eyelids on the ground deserves the notice of an historical painter. On visiting the spot later, Prince Darma found that his eyelids had grown into a shrub. He had the wit to take some of the leaves and pour boiling water upon them. Ever after, by simply drinking a little of the precious liquor, he was able to keep sleep at bay and pursue his thoughts with added zest and profit.

The English history of the plant is comparatively brief. According to the popular statement, tea was introduced into this country from Holland in 1666. D'Israeli, however, thinks the date earlier, because he once heard

of a collector whose treasures included Oliver Cromwell's teapot. This, perhaps, would be better evidence had we not all heard of the museum which possessed a small skull certified to be the head of Oliver Cromwell when a boy. None the less, one Thomas Garway, a tobacconist and coffee-dealer in Exchange Alley, is known to have sold tea at the rate of three pounds sterling per pound weight about 1660. Not, however, for a score or more of years later was tea at all common, although Charles the Second's queen, Henrietta, who had sipped it with gusto in Portugal, stamped the beverage with her approval in the Court. Mr. Waller wrote a poem on the new fashion, in which he praised together the "best of queens" and the "best of herbs." Mr. Waller, by the way, learned from a Jesuit who came from China in 1664 that tea and beaten-up eggs made a worthy substitute for a "competent meal." Concerning the popularisation of tea in this country, there is a story told by Southey of the great-grandmother of a friend of his, who made one of the party that sat down to the first pound of tea that ever came to Penrith. They boiled it in a kettle, and ate the leaves with butter

and salt, wondering wherein the attraction lay.

The wise tea-maker is suspicious of elaborate paraphernalia. The best tea is made with a black kettle on the fire, and an earthenware or china teapot. Copper kettles on tripods (heated by tiny spirit stoves that hold too little spirit), silver teapots, and kindred refinements, do not help the leaf. Nor should strainers be desired. Tea requires no "patents," least of all a spoon resembling a perforated walnut, alleged to be unrivalled for the preparation of a single cup. A single cup! Who, if the tea were worth drinking, ever wanted but a single cup? Tea should be brewed of the right strength at the beginning, poured out at once into cups and reserved cups (or decanted into another teapot), and then remade. To burden the water with more leaves than it can attend to is thoughtless, and every drop that is afterwards added impairs the flavour of the liquor; notwithstanding the old Scotch lady who recommended a certain brand of leaf because it had "such a grip of the thir-r-d water." Using too little tea is a fault never committed by the unwise and imprudent. The

ordinary rule is one spoonful for each guest and one for the pot, but some brands go farther than others. A large pot is imperative. Few things in life are more saddening than the smallness of some people's teapots. The teapot should be warmed for the reception of the leaves. Wetting the tea, as it is called, is a horrid habit. All the water that is required for each brew should be poured in at once on the instant that it boils. Water that has long been boiling is unprofitable and stale and incapable of extracting from the opening leaf its richest essences. When there has been delay and it is impracticable to boil a full kettle again, it is well to pour into it from a high altitude a little fresh cold water. The more forcible the impact of this new water, the more is the old supply invigorated and fitted to cope worthily with the leaf. "At your ease," sang the Emperor Kien Long in the poem that is painted on every teapot in China—"at your ease drink this precious liquor, which chases away the five causes of trouble."

Men's tea, I think, excels women's. Taking them as a whole one may say that no class of

men make such good tea as undergraduates. Time is theirs ; conveniences are to hand ; and though they are young and ardent, haste and enthusiasm are bad form. Hence the brew has a dignity, a gravity, a composure worthy of it. There is something Asiatic about the reserved undergraduate—and to-day the conscious ones are all reserved—that stimulates tea to do its best for him. Later in life, when he has left the university and met a woman, the undergraduate becomes again an Occidental. These undergraduate tea connoisseurs are a development of the last few years : the invitation, “ Look in this afternoon and try my new Orange Pekoe,” to which grey walls, stained by the stress of centuries, now re-echo, would strike dismay to the heart of Cuthbert Bede. The thoughtful undergraduate as soon misses his tobacco as his tea. He presides over the teapot with the air of Roger Bacon in his laboratory. Men always bring to a culinary feat this interested manner a little touched by mystery. To the woman cooking is natural ; to the man it is ex-orbitant, and, partially, a lark.

Just as men are more intimately interested

than women in the making of tea, so are they often more subtly conscious of its merits. Women do not discriminate so calmly. Tea to them is tea; tea to a man is China, or Indian, or Ceylon, "golden-tipped," "overland borne," and the like. It is not for men but for families that polysyllabic brands are put upon the market. For families, for families, does Arabi Pasha beguile the tedium of exile by overlooking plantations in Ceylon; for families are artists employed to delineate aged grandmothers in the act of being reminded of the delicious teas of thirty years ago. That is why men who understand offer you better tea than women.

But it must not be supposed that the art of appreciating tea is unknown to women. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I knew a venerable lady with whom tea-making was almost a religious rite. To her high-backed chair was first brought the caddy—an inlaid casket—which was deposited on a table beside her. Then from the depths of a china vase the key was extracted. My hostess assumed her spectacles, and, taking the key, turned it gravely, scooped out spoonfuls heaped high of the

fragrant leaves—and they were very fragrant—and tipped them into the silver teapot proffered to her as by a royal cupbearer. Then she closed the lid, locked it, and handed the key to the attendant maid, who first bore it to its abode, and then, returning, carried the caddy reverently before her to its accustomed niche; while her mistress removed her spectacles and relaxed the tension of her features until they once more shone with their natural benignancy.

The happiest tea-drinkers are they who have generous friends in China. No tea is like theirs. That inscrutable humourist, Li Hung Chang, left presents of priceless tea in his wake as he passed smiling through the West—tea with a distinction until then unsuspected by the few persons whose glory it was to taste it. Among these was Mr. Gladstone, great among tea-drinkers, whose pleasant humour it was to speak of a cup as a dish. Dean Stanley was among the tea-giants, and Dr. Johnson's prowess is a by-word. Hartley Coleridge was another colossus of the caddy. One who knew him tells that once on being asked how many cups he was in the habit of drinking,

the poet replied with scorn, "Cups! I don't count by cups. I count by pots,"¹

The commonest tea is black, and it is almost always a blend, even when the terms Congou and Souchong are employed. China, India, and Ceylon—all three—are levied upon for these mixtures. Their description in the catalogues is worth study; indeed, all merchants' adjectives are worth study. A table of ten graduated qualities of black teas lies before me. The lowest priced variety is "pure and useful"; then "strong and liquoring"; then "strong and rich flavoured." While the same kind, but twopence dearer, is "finer grade and very economical"; then "splendid liquor"; then "extra choice and strongly recommended"; then "beautiful quality"; then "soft and rich"; then "small young leaf, magnificent liquor"; and, finally, at three shillings and fourpence, "very choice, small leaf, a connoisseur's tea."

¹ Hartley's father, in answer to a tea-question, made a reply touched by no such arrogance. Carlyle tells, in the "Life of John Sterling," how one afternoon at Highgate, Mrs. Gillman handed Coleridge a belated cup of tea with the remark that she hoped it was all right. "Better than I deserve, madam, better than I deserve," was the reply.

But this is not a list for the true connoisseur : to him three-and-fourpenny tea would mean little. In another list I find the description "very pungent and flavoury." "Syrupy" is also a hard-worked epithet. It would puzzle a conscientious merchant to fit any of these terms, even the humblest, to some of the tea that one now and then is forced to drink. But the British tourist is attracted not by tea as tea, but by tea with accessories. The late Mr. Arthur Cecil, the comedian, used to tell with great glee of the cannibal tea at Kew : thus—"Tea, plain, 6d. ;" "Tea, with shrimps, 9d. ;" "Tea, with children, 1s." Of all the public varieties the tea obtained at a railway station is perhaps the worst. The liquor served at those carnivals which are known to school-boys as tea-fights (or bun-struggles) is a close competitor, but being free, or inexpensive, it has an advantage over the station tea, which is costly. A question in an examination paper circulated among the students at a London hospital, asked the reader to "give some idea of the grief felt by the refreshment-room tea at never having seen Asia." This sorrow might be shared by the station blend. Ship's tea, that is

to say, tea in the cabin of the ocean tramp would be worse, only that at sea one is too hungry to care for refinements of flavour. The officers of a vessel on which I once was super-cargo discriminated between tea and coffee by taking the temperature of the milk jug. If hot, the beverage was coffee ; if cold, tea.

Concerning School-Hampers

Concerning School-Hampers

THE other day, while aimlessly turning over the pages of a list of one of the great London Stores, I came upon a description of the school-hampers and Christmas-hampers which the firm is prepared to despatch—more than prepared, one supposes, even pleased : for if there is one employment above another that should carry good humour with it, it is the preparation and despatch of a hamper. As I had always conceived hampers to be a home-designed product of the kitchen and store-room, their supply was an additional proof of the thoroughness of the Stores system. I knew that conjurers were to be obtained there, and Ethiopian minstrels, and the kinematoscope, and paper plates for picnics, and I knew also that the transfer of a non-transferable Stores ticket is one of the sins which the Recording Angel blots ; but the hamper-page was a true surprise. Forthwith, I determined, if ever a change of employment is necessary, to apply to Messrs. Blank & Co. for engagement as their hamper editor, or even to

establish a hamper bureau of my own. In a world which is mostly disappointment and frustration, the life of a hamper editor must be radiant.

Half the hamper-page was devoted to school-hampers and half to Christmas-hampers, and really it was very good reading. Few novelists write so much to the point. Here is the first entry—

SCHOOL-HAMPERS AT 5s. CONTAIN—

2 lbs. currant cake.	1 Jar marmalade.
1 Ham and chicken sausage.	1 Bottle sweets.
1 Jar potted meat.	12 Oranges.
1 „ jam.	2 lbs. mixed nuts.

What expression of satisfaction is now most in favour at school I cannot say—“ripping,” perhaps, or perhaps “jolly decent”: I heard both terms lately, although they may have been survivals—but even a five-shilling hamper should elicit it. The “1 Bottle sweets” is, perhaps, a questionable inclusion. Butter-scotch, toffee, and chocolate (the cream dug out and eaten first) are sound boyish tastes; but “1 Bottle sweets” has a feminine ring. The purist also would object to the phrases “1 Jar jam” and

Concerning School-Hampers 61

“ 1 Jar marmalade ”—pot is the word. And the oranges would, one hopes, at another season be replaced by apples. Yet, carp as we may, the five-shilling hamper is desirable.

Now see what another crown will bring—enough for any one boy :—

SCHOOL-HAMPERS AT 10S. CONTAIN—

4 lbs. currant cake.	1 Bottle sweets.
1 Ham and chicken sausage.	2 lbs. mixed confectionery.
2 Jars potted meat.	6 Mince pies.
1 Jar marmalade.	24 Oranges.
1 „ 'jam.	2 lbs. mixed nuts.

The “ 1 Bottle sweets ” still persists, but “ 2 lbs. mixed confectionery ” come in to rectify it. Come in also “ 6 Mince pies ”—the list clearly belongs to the winter—and there is a lavish duplication of other matters. One of the “ 2 Jars potted meat ” might well be anchovy or bloater paste—anchovy for choice, because it lasts longer ; and I do not greatly esteem the “ Ham and chicken sausage.” Boys infinitely prefer sardines ; indeed, the omission of sardines from all these hampers is a serious fault.

Add ten shillings :—

SCHOOL-HAMPERS AT 20s. CONTAIN—

4 lbs. currant cake.	6 Mince pies.
2 Ham and chicken saus- ages.	2 lb. box mixed crystallised fruit.
1 German sausage.	4 Jars assorted potted meats.
1 Box braised beef, 2 lbs.	24 Oranges.
2 Jars jam.	3 lbs. mixed nuts.
2 „, marmalade.	
2 Bottles sweets.	

With a shining pound it is manifest that one may make a young friend very ill. Probably this class of hamper is intended rather for brothers or for boys of conspicuous generosity. From one or two items, such as the “1 Box braised beef, 2 lbs.,” it would seem that the gentleman who now acts as hamper editor has an eye to bedroom feasts, because the theory of the hamper is not to take the place of school meals, but to amend them, to add a silver lining to them; and braised beef is a viand in itself rather than a concomitant. Hence, possibly, the nuts, whose shells are notoriously good to place on the stairs, where they crack beneath the feet of the approaching master and so give warning of danger. In default of nuts a small boy must endure the draughty duties of sentinel. To return to our criticism, the “1 Bottle sweets”

Concerning School-Hampers 63

has now become two, and the "mixed confectionery" has given way to "mixed crystallised fruits." The principal lack in each variety of hamper is drink, unless the oranges are calculated to fill that office. Why not a dozen of stone ginger beer in the stead of sweets?

To learn the news that a hamper is awaiting one in the hall is a supreme school joy: for one moment it can render the heaviest imposition null and void. Of the behaviour of boys on receiving hampers much has been written. Ann and Jane Taylor's "Plum-cake" and "Another Plum-cake" are among favourite nursery apologues, and Mrs. Elizabeth Turner has worked the same theme with admirable thoroughness. In a moving trilogy she vividly presents the three methods in which a large plum-cake may be dealt with. First comes Harry. Harry was greedy and stingy.

"When it arrived, the little boy
Laugh'd, sung, and jumped about for joy;
But, ah, how griev'd I am to say
He did not give a bit away!

He *ate*, and *ate*, and *ate* his fill;
No wonder that it made him ill.
Pain in his stomach and his head
Oblig'd him soon to go to bed."

Then comes Peter. Peter was stingy, too, but stingy to himself as well as to others—in short, a miser.

“ And sometimes silently he’d go,
When all he thought engag’d below,
To eat a *very little* piece,
For fear his treasure should decrease.

When next he went (it makes me laugh),
He found the mice had eaten half ;
And what remain’d, though once a treat,
So mouldy ’twas not fit to eat.”

Lastly, William. William was free-handed, virtuous ; William behaved nobly.

“ ‘ Come round,’ he cried—‘ each take a slice ;
Each have his proper share of ice !
We’ll eat it up among us here ;
My birthday comes but once a year.’ ”

At this point, lo ! a blind beggar, to whom William incontinently yielded his own slice and a penny besides. The poem ends—

“ I need not ask each youthful breast
Which of these boys you like the best ;
Let goodness, then, incitement prove,
And imitate the boy you love.”

How can the youthful breast demur ? William,

Concerning School-Hampers 65

William it is who, of course, comes out at the head of the poll.

Quite as interesting a study to the psychologist is the conduct of the other boys when one of their school-fellows receives a hamper. But there are pleasanter matters for inquiry. Poor human nature !

The hamper is not for food alone ; it is also the travelling compartment of live stock. Dogs who travel without a ticket usually do so in a hamper. Cats are conveyed by that means from Blackburn to Torquay, and the next day but one, dishevelled and footsore, they creep into the Blackburn kitchen once again, and thus win attention from the *Spectator* and Mr. Tegetmeier of the *Field*, who occupies the same attitude to the homing instinct that Mrs. Prig did to Mrs. Harris. It is strange that no one ever meets a cat under the dominion of the homing instinct. It would be quite unmistakable, because of the bee-line which it takes and the rate it has to travel at. As Mark Twain wrote of the jackass rabbit—"Long after it is out of sight you can hear it whizz." I suppose a homing cat never stops for a mouse.

Carrier pigeons are conveyed in hampers to

the place where their flight is to begin; but not all birds are so lucky. I was never so surprised in my life as when the naturalist's man from whom I once bought a cockatoo thrust the screaming thing into a deal box hardly bigger than itself, and hammered nails two inches long through the lid. Then he sawed off a corner for ventilation, wrapped up the box in brown paper, fastened it noisily with string, and slammed it on the counter before me. Five hours later, after a weary and cold railway journey, a very angry and very dirty cockatoo was liberated by two frightened men in wicket-keeping gloves.

The Stores-supplied hamper is, I take it, designed to meet the requirements of the bachelor uncle who has no kitchen where he may prepare one. It therefore has notable uses. But the hamper, as most boys understand it, is a home-made blessing. More than one friendly intellect has contributed to its plenishing. The maternal mind is, of course, the fount and origin of good, but cook has had her say too. Cook knows Master Tom's tastes as well as any one, perhaps better. Cook has memories . . . hence the cold plum-pudding.

Concerning School-Hampers 67

And at hamper-time a certain reason for the existence of sisters becomes evident : they can make toffee. The “1 Bottle sweets” is unknown to home-made hampers, but a bottle of raspberry vinegar has sometimes found its way therein. I have also a recollection of doughnuts. Quince jam was of old a stimulating surprise. But the crowning triumph of any hamper is, of course, the cake. That is the nucleus ; all else is accessory.

Concerning Catalogues

Concerning Catalogues

AT a time when too much is done for the inassiduous, roving reader; when the tendency is entirely towards frangible, even friable, reading-matter; one hesitates to commend to those that love literature the merits of catalogues. And yet a catalogue—a thing that costs nothing, a thing rescued possibly from the waste-paper basket—may be more stimulative of pleasant thought and fancy, may launch the mind on longer and more eventful voyages across the seas of memory, than can many an expensive and well-bound book. The catalogue itself is nothing; its strength is in its profusion of suggestions, of potentialities, of words that stand for facts. One is continually reminded. Reminded of what? Of a thousand things.

Keats has told us what Fancy can do (provided you have it) to alleviate a winter night:

“She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost.”

But if you have it not—if your own unaided

resources are powerless in drear December to re-create the pomps of June—there is a sure passport to those joys. A catalogue of roses. The tender poetry, the rich extravagance, the warm enthusiasm of a rose-grower's list cannot miscarry. Wherever the eye alights it is gladdened. At the head of all—Abel Carrière: "Dark velvety crimson, with fiery red centre, perfect form, handsome foliage." A line or so lower—Alfred Colomb: "Brilliant light scarlet crimson, large, full and globular, a magnificent rose of superb shape, very fragrant." Ah, those Frenchmen! How is Monsieur Boncenne described? "Dark velvety crimson, superb, one of the best dark roses." Could anything be better? we ask ourselves, and come forthwith upon the Baron de Bonstetten: "Velvety blackish crimson; an improved Monsieur Boncenne"! Thus the rose-grower lures one on; next year there will be an improved Baron de Bonstetten.

What must one do for one's own name to be whispered to the coming ages by the breath of a rose? In imperial action, to conquer the Soudan would seem to be not enough, for there is no bloom, free-flowering or rampant, velvety

or superb, known as Lord Kitchener. There is, it is true, a Sir Herbert Kitchener chrysanthemum: "A very large Japanese, with very broad florets; bright golden chestnut bronze, with golden amber reverse florets, long and drooping, forming a very deep and graceful flower; one of the grandest novelties of the season." But the rose, the rose! How does one commend one's name to the grower of roses? One, apparently, need not be a professed lover of the flower, for Charles Lamb, who cared little for the garden, has the honour; and so has Socrates, who preferred hemlock. The Charles Lamb is "a soft cherry rose, very bright"; which sounds far more like Leigh Hunt. Socrates is "coppery bronze shaded with pink." Among other literary roses one finds Lord Macaulay, "variable, from scarlet crimson to rich plum;" Lord Bacon, "deep crimson, shaded with velvety black, blooming abundantly;" Charles Darwin, "a rich brownish crimson, perfectly reflexed and imbricated;" John Stuart Mill (a rose may bear any name), "a bright clear red, beautiful form." But the mystery of rose-christening is still thick. Why is there no Shakespeare, no Thackeray, and

especially, no Waller? Among the living the honour is given only to Royalty, to Dean Hole (as is fitting), to statesmen, to warriors, and to enviable ladies. Authors are not recognised until they are dead. There is a Marquis of Salisbury, with a character that should rejoice the truly blue: "Rich crimson, constantly in flower, semi-double, a very beautiful variety."

But the sweetest names are the French: "Souvenir de Malmaison," "Camille de Rohan," "Eugène Verdier," "Victor Verdier," "Gloire de Dijon," "Maréchal Niel," "Maurice Bernardin," "Dupuy Jamain," "General Jacqueminot," "Flora Nabonard," "Prosper Laugier," "La Boule d'Or." What poignant memories must such names bring to the English exile in arid wastes abroad, in the Australian "Never Never" or the brumal fastnesses of the Yukon!

"These will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost."

So also will the pages of a cricket outfitter's list; but whereas the poetry of the rose list is lyric, that of Wisden's is epic. The post brought me, one morning recently, a copy of "Wisden's Illustrated Catalogue," with its wonderful array of old, scarred, and honourable

bats. They stand in eloquent pairs, two couples to the page; they are cracked and splintered and pegged and bound; and on each is the short and simple testimony of some mighty cricketer. Cricketers who write letters do not waste words. "The best bat I ever used" is the laconic tribute paid by poor George Ulyett of Sheffield to a "Crawford's Patent Exceller." Six words only, but how tremendous their force! The best bat ever used by that genial giant, now gone for ever, the hero of a thousand matches, the darling of Yorkshire's three ridings, and the terror of every other county! Turning on, you come upon a bruised and buffeted relic with several black bands. "This old bat," says the inscription, "has done wonderful service. I played with it both with Lord Sheffield's and Mr. Stoddart's teams, and three summers at home. It was the best bat I ever played with. In first-class cricket alone more than 3500 runs must have been made from it." And now it lies idle, resting until the day of dissolution. The writer of these words is Johnny Briggs. Turning on again, Brown's "grave-digger" is before you—the bat with which Brown of Driffield

made his 140 for Mr. Stoddart's Australian team in 1895. "Brown often has a look at it when he is in London," says the catalogue. Had it been mine (and my runs) it should never have left my possession. But cricketers are more generous than ordinary persons.

To certain temperaments a mere list of roses would, in default of the flowers themselves, be more satisfying than a description of those flowers from the pen of the richest writer—the pen of, say, Dean Farrar. The catalogue, so to speak, touches the button, and yourself does the rest. It is automatic literature. Sometimes a catalogue far transcends the event. Compare with the noise and unrest of the auction-room the quiet pencilling of a book-sale inventory secure in an arm-chair. Again, the compiler of catalogues (such is human optimism) is rarely a realist; he prefers to overlook blemishes and fractures, stains and incompleteness. Thus, to the arm-chaired student of the list every book is fair and uncropped, whereas the purchaser may have many imperfections beneath his faltering eye. Similarly, there are programmes which are more alluring than the performances to which they

point. Many persons on a return visit to Barnum's must have found the welter of superlatives in Olympia's astounding official pamphlet a good substitute for feats which familiarity had rendered unexciting. The gentleman, for instance, who curled himself in a metal ball and rolled himself to the summit of a spiral staircase could surprise but once, whereas the adjectives employed to describe his achievement surprised continually. There are novels (in the halfpenny papers) more interesting in the synopsis than the narrative, and there are many stories more notable in their chapter headings than in themselves—Ainsworth's, for example. I never tire of reading his full-bodied promises: "How Queen Mary visited the Lions' Tower; how Magog gave his dame a lesson; and how Xit conquered a monkey and was worsted by a bear;" "How the Princess Elizabeth was confronted by Sir Thomas Wyatt in the torture chamber"—these are ever interesting; but with the text of "The Tower of London" I have, I feel certain, done for ever.

A like pleasure may come from the table of contents in a collection of poetry, but particularly from an index of first lines. I remember

once picking up the publisher's circular of one of Mr. Bullen's volumes, "Lyrics from the Song-Books of the Elizabethan Age," and being almost as much fascinated by the index of first lines which it contained as afterwards by the poems in their entirety. Indeed, in several cases the first line is more satisfying than the complete lyric, for the Elizabethans had a special genius for beginnings. In the first line the great poet and little poet may meet on common ground ; it is only in the sequel that they are distinguished, and you learn which has the finer note, which the true staying power. On the threshold there is equality. "There is a garden in her face ;" "A little, pretty, bonnie lass was walking ;" "Come, sorrow, come, sit down and mourn with me ;" "Lie down, poor heart, and die awhile for grief ;" "My thoughts are winged with hopes, my hopes with love ;" "The cypress curtain of the night is spread ;" "Arise, my thoughts, and mount you with the sun ;" "Care for thy soul as thing of greatest price"—these are a few of the circular's first lines ; and each one makes even a prosaic man something of a poet by mere incitement to him to speculate as to the issue.

To a mind at all active or curious an odd number of Dr. Wright's "English Dialect Dictionary" is intensely absorbing. For solace less academical there is an artless and unexact-ing paper which can impart more delight than anything produced by the deliberate fusion of Fleet Street intellects. This is the sturdy little catalogue of wants and redundancies called *The Bazaar*—or rather, *The Exchange and Mart*, for *The Bazaar* is the paper proper, which is little; while *The Exchange and Mart* is its advertisement supplement, which is everything. Like a flourishing rose on an insignificant manetti stock, the supplement puts forth the blossoms, while the parent unobtrusively avoids the eye. These blossoms have a variety of which one cannot tire. Advertisers from every part of the United Kingdom meet there to accommodate each other. Magic-lanterns are offered for guinea-pigs, bicycles as good as new for sitting hens, complete sets of the *Penny Encyclopædia* for double-barrelled guns, old Broadwoods for young spaniels. One need require nothing oneself to find the prettiest amusement in the desiderata of others. On a railway journey one

reads and reads, knowing neither fatigue nor satiety ; section gives way to section, and the miles are eaten up until the haven is reached and real life substituted for the half-life of the train. Taken from beginning to end *The Exchange and Mart* will last you from St. Pancras to York, from Exeter to Paddington, from London Bridge to Charing Cross. It is the best railway reading. I can delight in it when I cannot read Mr. Herbert Spencer.

Kindred pleasure may be extracted from the illustrated advertisements of houses in the paper called *Country Life*. It is nothing that one's own belongings are permanently settled in a London street : this need not diminish fascinated interest in eligible manor-houses in Surrey or unique moated granges in Kent. You can still choose or reject—the unassailable privilege of the reader of catalogues. “Too damp” is one ; “Too overgrown,” another ; and “I don't much care for that gable” you say of a third. And then comes the ideal. “What is the agent's address? Oh, well, perhaps it doesn't matter. . . .” An author must be successful indeed if his local colour can so bring the country before one as

these three or four pages of photographs can.

Private enterprise has provided *The Exchange and Mart* with at least one worthy companion. In one respect, at any rate, it is better; for *The Exchange and Mart* is without personal character, whereas *The Amateur Trader*, the periodical catalogue of curiosities which Miss Millard, of Teddington, prepares for her clients, is a work of abounding individuality. "With sweet variety your taste I'll please," is Miss Millard's motto and achievement. The copy of *The Amateur Trader* which I quote from has, by way of coy preface, some of the compliments which have been paid to its strenuous editor. "A Viennese gentleman says: 'Your brilliant talents';" "A New York collector says: 'There is a snap and earnestness about your communication and catalogue—not a usual characteristic';" "A Lancashire lady says: 'Your letters are delightful reading—marvels of style, diction, easy grace, and, may I add? erudition.' " A catalogue thus graced at the portal would fail indeed were it unenterprising. Miss Millard has something of everything, and snap and earnestness, as the New

York gentleman says, behind all. More, she has poetry, as we see in this entry :—

“SAMPLERS. A small lot of pretty specimens of late last, and early this century, of more or less quaint designs, the work of several childish fingers. In handling these samplers one must confess to a tender and pathetic feeling in having the poet's words vividly brought to mind :—

‘ Long laid to rest the patient hands
That played with formal tints ;
And faded are the silken strands,
As sad and sallow chintz.’

Prices vary from half a guinea to a guinea.”

And in this :—

“BLUE Worcester China bead bracelet and pair of aigrettes, possible date, 1760—so, judging by the mountings, and judging by the colour—‘heavenly blue,’ denoting ‘constancy,’ could they not have been ordered by a love-sick swain of the period as an injunctive present to his lady-love to beware of inconstancy? This is the story they conjure up to the writer of this, who vividly sees back to it all. Let the mere *Philistine* gain-say it? £4, 4s.”

The transition from dreamy fancy to bald commerce is as abrupt as a cab accident ; but who would resent it? Again :—

"NAPOLEONIC. When you seriously commence to build up a collection I will be ready to greatly enrich it. The very continuous romance of the life of this delightfully human and grandly historical 'Soldier of Fortune,' with his dignity and his frailties, his magnanimity and his petty meannesses, his intrepid bravery and his contemptible cowardice, is alone so complete with fascination that I never can understand why this distinctly characterised mortal is, so to speak, passed over coldly, whilst so many insipid characters are gushed about ridiculously, in a comparative sense."

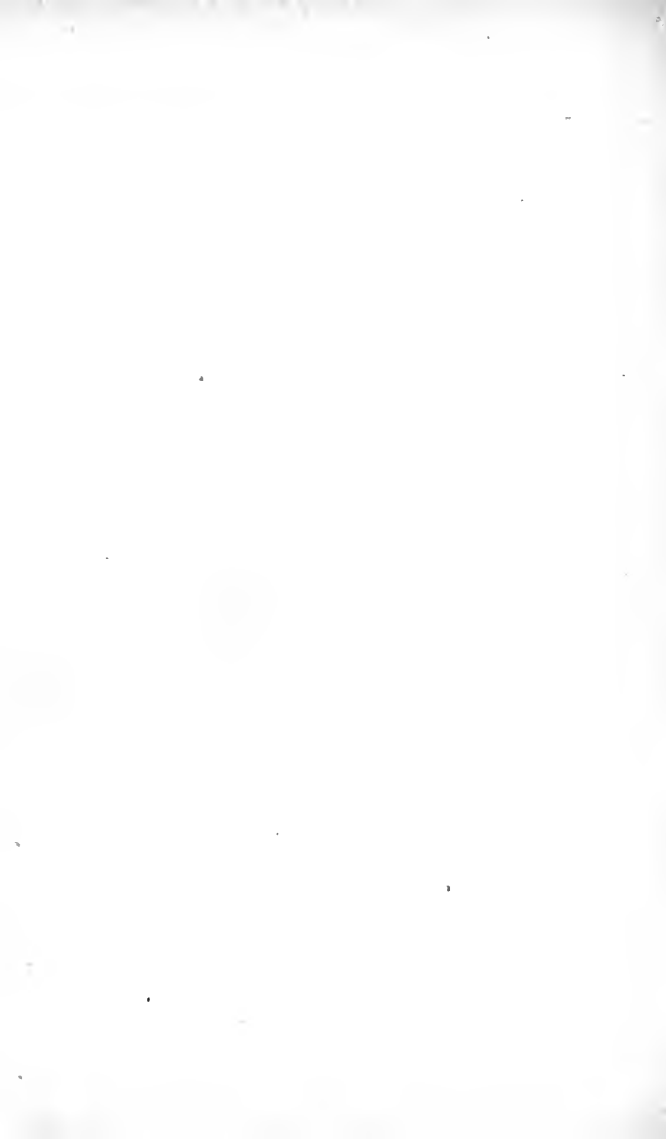
Miss Millard, when she has amassed the fortune that must inevitably be the reward of her energy, should take to literature. The ball is at her feet.

Another catalogue which has the stamp of personality is Mr. Bertram Dobell's. Mr. Dobell enriches the concluding pages of his list of second-hand books with passages from his reading and tender little poems of his own composing, even translations from Heine and three-lined prettinesses in a Japanese measure called the Haikai. But catalogues to be on occasion the best possible reading do not actually need such embellishment. A book catalogue, indeed, is self-sufficient.

Of the delectation which accompanies the leisurely examination, pencil in hand, of a second-hand bookseller's list, something has just been said. In the recesses of an arm-chair one can become the owner of first folios without even the exertion of nodding. By a stroke of the plumbago whatever is most desirable on Mr. Quaritch's shelves becomes (in fancy) your own. "Gerard's 'Herbal,' £2?" "Yes, I may as well have that;" and the proprietary cross springs into being on the margin. "Dame Juliana Berners' 'Boke of St. Albans'?" "And I will have that too"—another cross. "John Florio's 'Montaigne,' quarto?" "Ah! at last!" And so one goes on. What it is like actually to buy from Mr. Quaritch's list I have no notion. Such purchases as I have made of that great man (now, alas! no more) were carried through one-sidedly, in a not strictly commercial manner, for the library of a castle on the other side of the Pyrenees; hence I can speak only as a poor man. A poor man with a book catalogue is a feasting Barmecide, yet without his haste to despatch the meal. Or, rather, he is as one who through the panes of a sealed window

watches without envy a procession of those dishes of which he may not partake. Without envy; for, if covetousness at all worthy the name takes part in his feelings, he can never know the enjoyment of catalogues to the full. A mild, well-ordered inclination (to add sauce to the perusal) may be his, but nothing more; he must be utterly without rancour that others are richer than he.

Concerning Clothes



Concerning Clothes

IT is a curious experience to walk, as I did recently, behind a man dressed in one's old suit. You have a vision of yourself, or, if you will, a glimpse of your double, a reminder that you are not everybody. This being the first time I had seen the suit from the back, a vague sense of familiarity preceded recognition, and then, looking steadfastly on its pattern, I remembered how kindly and liberal a coat it was, and how easy and unconstrained all movements of limb had been in it, and how many years it still had before it, and I perceived sorrowfully that I had given away as noble a set of hartogs as man ever possessed. This proves how careful we should be in parting with cast-off suits. Thoreau affirmed that old clothes should be burnt : and, from the point of view of those who hold that attire ought to be autobiographical, this is true ; for how can tweeds handed on from one man to another continue to be autobiographical ? But Thoreau's contention was a counsel of perfection—that is to

say, advice for Thoreaus—and, moreover, so few persons have autobiographies that we may as well persevere in the bestowal of old clothes.

Of all old clothes, none wears so sorry an air as the old fur-lined coat. A new fur-lined coat is magnificent. It is a symbol of luxury, the antithesis of the hair shirt. It is more than a garment, it is a fortification. An Englishman's fur coat is his castle. But when decay has set in, when it is partly bald and entirely weather-worn, then the fur coat is the wretchedest object in civilisation. It is not good even for charades; although, in its luxuriant days, how versatile it was! From time to time it had been (inside out) most of the larger animals in the Zoo. Such versatility, indeed, has the fur coat that on the night of a children's party the prudent father turns the key upon it. Fur-lined coats never become hartogs; nor do overcoats. These, therefore, may be given away or sold without heart-flutterings; although the ordinary overcoat should not be parted with lightly. An old overcoat is a good fellow to accompany one to sea, to wear on deck on rough or rainy nights. But, strictly speaking, no overcoat becomes a hartog.

And what, I seem to hear you ask, what are hartogs? Old clothes that are less imposing and more comfortable than any others are hartogs. To be old is not sufficient; nor is it enough that they are easy. To be hartogs they must combine both these merits. Good clothes when they grow baggy and faded become hartogs; bad clothes, never. Inferior and ill-fitting clothes become merely "old clo." The derivation of hartogs is a secret; but all philologists, and all who, like Mr. Stevenson, have a "love of lovely words," will recognise in the term a neologue of singular fitness and attraction. Think about it for a minute or two, and you will realise that clothes of the kind described above could not possibly be known in any other way. They are hartogs—just hartogs, and nothing else. Old clothes of the common type one thinks of without affection, but hartogs are beloved. Anything is good enough to cover nakedness; hartogs do more—they confer cheerfulness and irresponsibility, they fit the wearer for a freer life. Yet it must be understood that hartogs are never absolutely disreputable, never so old that one cannot meet the vicar's wife without shame.

In ordinary life the wearer of hartogs disdains

coats and mackintoshes, except in extreme stress of weather. It is the winds and rains of heaven and the might of the sun that have made his hartogs what they are, the indoor life produces a very inferior result. The best hartogs are stamped by the universe itself. They are the garb of the wise traveller. You meet hartogs on Helvellyn and among the Langdale Pikes ; you recognise them in the Black Forest and on the Furka ; you are aware of them in the Trossachs and beneath the smooth rotundities and swelling undulations of the South Downs. Nature's best lovers woo her in hartogs.

This definition should be exhaustive enough, but still a little may be added. It should be said, for instance, that few women have enough courage to achieve hartogs. The mass dare not. There are also men who dare not, and there are men whose position is against it. Bishops probably have no hartogs.

Of all hartogs the coat is the most dearly prized. One does not feel so affectionately towards a waistcoat : little is lovable about a waistcoat ; but a coat becomes a friend, a brother. Men have worn coats for decades. A satisfying coat is worth its weight in platinum,

because it is so rare. The waistcoat is within the compass of any tailor ; but a coat is different. Nothing is quite so disgusting as the determination of one's tailor to have his own way in the matter of the coat. You order a dozen personal touches ; you stipulate for no pads in the shoulders ; for a deep collar, to turn up in wet or cold ; for extra pockets inside ; for no lining in the back ; for no fashionable antics in the cutting. And the tailor smiles and smiles. None the less is he a villain, for when the coat comes home it is precisely what you struggled to make certain it should not be. A tailor who will obey to the letter is more than rubies. Hence the loveliness of a truly good coat.

Hats are lovable, too. Boots, however, are too transient to be loved. One dares not love them. At the most a pair of boots can be hartogs for a year. Boots seem to me civilisation's most conspicuous failure : they pinch, they cramp, they mar, they have every tightness but water-tightness ; they are hot in summer and cold in winter ; they have no durability ; they are costly. They make it almost worth while to have one's feet amputated

early in life. Lord Erskine said it was comforting to remember that when the hour came for all secrets to be revealed, then, at length, we should learn why shoes are always made too tight. And yet what is to be done? To go barefoot is, after all these ages of shoe-leather, impossible, and sandals are chilly and Socialistic. Indoors, of course, there are slippers, and latterly a very excellent kind devised of felt has been obtainable. But no good work, it has been said, has ever been done in slippers, and certainly no good walking. For out-door life in this mutable England we have yet to discover the fitting boot. The quest of it is the business of a lifetime : a man may be said never to come within measurable distance of being well-shod until he has one foot in the grave.

In winter there is nothing more comfortable than hartogs ; but in summer flannels supersede them. Buoyancy, liberty, the power to do—these are put on with flannels. Flannels are as levelling almost as nakedness. On the cricket field all men are equal. Has not Richardson bowled Lord Hawke these many seasons ? and I doubt not but he would york even the Prince of Wales. But once, in appearance at any rate,

there were distinctions. In the old days, when George Parr hit to long-leg for six, and George Freeman bowled like lightning, flannels were a distinguishing sign. In those days the professional was marked by his dress for the dependant he was. He wore a coloured shirt and his whites were not white. You may see them in old photographs. My earliest recollection of county cricket is a Sussex and Surrey match twenty years ago; and I remember distinctly that Pooley's flannels were yellow, Jupp's grey. But now, except in a few cases, there is nothing to distinguish the two classes of cricketers. A change has come over the professional, and his flannels shine like an amateur's. From the pavilion a stranger would find it impossible to pick out the paid and unpaid. Professionals even wear ties, a thing unheard of in the 'sixties and not to be endured. Yet this new sartorial complexion which the game wears is good, for it emphasises the socialism of cricket.

The opponents of the press ought to bear it in mind that no substitute for clothing is more effective than a newspaper—that is to say, no sudden substitute. An American enthusiast who recently walked round the world for a

wager wore only a copy of the *New York Herald* until he had amassed, by exhibiting himself, enough money to buy clothes; and now and then come tidings of a party of tourists who have escaped from the attentions of Italian banditti or Hungarian brigands in nothing more substantial than last week's *Times*. It seems to be established that when in difficulties for clothes the first thought of civilised man is for a newspaper; just as the first thought of primitive man was for a leaf. Not the least funny story in that diverting book, "Many Cargoes," tells of a captain who lost his "cloes at cribbage," and was found the next day by his rescuer "in a pair of socks and last week's paper." This, as we have seen, is not a particularly novel position, but what distinguished Captain Bross from his companions in this form of misfortune was his occupation. When discovered he was "reading the advertisements." That is true philosophy. The completest *déshabille* is obtainable in the tropics. The late Henry Drummond once wrote home from Central Africa that he had nothing on but a helmet and three mosquitoes. Sydney Smith, who was the first man to pray in August for the power

to take off his flesh and sit in his bones (a blessed condition, which, on paper at least, has been made possible by Professor Röntgen), described the height of bliss attainable by a Sierra Leone native, as sitting in one half of a melon, with the other half on his head, eating the pulp.

Of all men, tramps and peers care least about their appearance. This indifference to public opinion of one's clothes is indeed an enviable state to reach. I have always liked the story of the old fellow who at home dressed badly because every one knew him, and badly when he travelled because no one knew him. He was one of the few men who have had courage to dress to please themselves. Most of us dress to please other persons ; and, even then, it must be added, rarely succeed. The late Professor Fawcett objected on principle to make himself uncomfortable by dressing for dinner, but he had a very charming way of disarming criticism and propitiating his hostess. He had upstairs, he would assure her, an excellent dress suit for which he had paid a high price, and if it would be any satisfaction to the company, his secretary would bring it down and display it. But

one has to be a Professor Fawcett to carry off such an idiosyncrasy as this. At many dinner parties the guests have been asked as much on account of their clothes as their wit—the man without a wedding garment in the parable apparently had no compensating distinction of intellect. A good dinner-story tells how Dean Stanley once arrived at table with one side of his collar flapping in the air. During the meal his hostess asked him if he was aware of its condition, and if he would like any assistance in rectifying it. “Oh, no,” he replied genially; “it broke while I was dressing. I don’t mind. Do you?” These are the great men.

Of the clothes of women I know little, except that the fashions often change too quickly, and it seems very hard for some girls to dress in such a way as to satisfy their elder sisters.

Concerning Fires

Concerning Fires

“Oh, pile a bright fire!”

—EDWARD FITZGERALD.

A FRIEND of mine making a list of the things needed for the cottage that he had taken, put at the head “bellows.” Then he thought for some minutes, and was found merely to have added “tongs” and “poker.” Then he asked some one to finish it. A fire, indeed, furnishes. Nothing else, not even a chair, is absolutely necessary; and it is difficult for a fire to be too large. Some of the grates put into modern houses by the jerry-builders would move an Elizabethan to tears, so petty and mean are they, and so incapable of radiation. We English people would suffer no loss in kindliness and tolerance were the ingle-nook restored to our homes. The ingle humanises.

Although the father of the family no longer, as in ancient Greece, performs on the hearth religious rites, yet it is still a sacred spot. Lovers whisper there, and there friends ex-

change confidences. Husband and wife face the fire hand in hand. The table is for wit and good humour, the hearth is for something deeper and more personal. The wisest counsels are offered beside the fire, the most loving sympathy and comprehension are there made explicit. It is the scene of the best dual companionship. The fire itself is a friend, having the prime attribute—warmth. One of the most human passages of that most human poem, “The Deserted Village,” tells how the wanderer was now and again taken by the memory of the hearth of his distant home :—

“ I still had hopes my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down. . . .
Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw. . . .”

Only by the fireside could a man so unbosom himself. A good fire extracts one's best ; it will not be resisted. FitzGerald's “Meadows in Spring” contains some of the best fireside stanzas :—

“ Then with an old friend
I talk of our youth—
How 'twas gladsome, but often
Foolish, forsooth :
But gladsome, gladsome !

Or to get merry
We sing some old rhyme,
That made the wood ring again
In summer time—
Sweet summer time !

Then we go to drinking,
Silent and snug ;
Nothing passes between us
Save a brown jug—
Sometimes !

And sometimes a tear
Will rise in each eye,
Seeing the two old friends
So merrily—
So merrily !”

The hearth also is for ghost stories ; indeed, a ghost story demands a fire. If England were warmed wholly by hot-water pipes or gas stoves the Society for Psychical Research would be dissolved. Gas stoves are poor comforters. They heat the room, it is true, but they do so after a manner of their own, and there they stop. For encouragement, for inspiration, you seek the gas stove in vain. Who could be witty, who could be humane, before a gas stove ? It does so little for the eye and nothing for the imagination ; its flame is so artificial and restricted a thing, its glowing heart so shallow

and ungenerous. It has no voice, no personality, no surprises ; it submits to the control of a gas company, which, in its turn, is controlled by Parliament. Now, a fire proper has nothing to do with Parliament. A fire proper has whims, ambitions, and impulses unknown to gas-burners, undreamed of by asbestos. Yet even the gas stove has advantages and merits when compared with hot-water pipes. The gas stove at least offers a focus for the eye, unworthy though it be ; and you can make a semi-circle of good people before it. But with hot-water pipes not even that is possible. From the security of ambush they merely heat, and heat whose source is invisible is hardly to be coveted at all. Moreover, the heat of hot-water pipes is but one remove from stuffiness.

Coals are a perpetual surprise, for no two consignments burn exactly alike. There is one variety that does not burn—it explodes. This kind comes mainly from the slate quarries, and, we must believe, reaches the coal merchant by accident. Few accidents, however, occur so frequently. Another variety, found in its greatest perfection in railway waiting-rooms,

does everything but emit heat. A third variety jumps and burns the hearth-rug. One can predicate nothing definite concerning a new load of coal at any time, but particularly so if the consignment was ordered to be "exactly like the last."

A true luxury is a fire in the bedroom. This is fire at its most fanciful and mysterious. One lies in bed watching drowsily the play of the flames, the flicker of the shadows. The light leaps up and hides again, the room gradually becomes peopled with fantasies. Now and then a coal drops and accentuates the silence. Movement with silence is one of the curious influences that come to us: hence, perhaps, part of the fascination of the kinematoscope, wherein trains rush into stations, and streets are seen filled with hurrying people and bustling vehicles, and yet there is no sound save the clicking of the mechanism. With a fire in one's bedroom sleep comes witchingly.

Another luxury is reading by firelight, but this is less to the credit of the fire than the book. An author must have us in no uncertain grip when he can induce us to read him by a light so impermanent as that of the elfish coal.

Nearer and nearer to the page grows the bended head, and nearer and nearer to the fire moves the book. Boys and girls love to read lying full length on the hearthrug.

Some people maintain a fire from January to December ; and, indeed, the days on which a ruddy grate offends are very few. According to Mortimer Collins, out of the three hundred and sixty-five days that make up the year only on the odd five is a fire quite dispensable. A perennial fire is, perhaps, luxury writ large. The very fact that sunbeams falling on the coals dispirit them to greyness and ineffectual pallor seems to prove that when the sun rides high it is time to have done with fuel except in the kitchen or in the open air.

The fire in the open air is indeed joy perpetual, and there is no surer way of renewing one's youth than by kindling and tending it, whether it be a rubbish fire for potatoes, or an aromatic offering of pine spindles and fir cones, or the scientific structure of the gipsy to heat a tripod-swung kettle. The gipsy's fire is a work of art. "Two short sticks were stuck in the ground, and a third across to them like a triangle. Against this frame a number of the

smallest and driest sticks were leaned, so that they made a tiny hut. Outside these there was a second layer of longer sticks, all standing, or rather leaning, against the first. If a stick is placed across, lying horizontally, supposing it catches fire, it just burns through the middle and that is all, the ends go out. If it is stood nearly upright, the flame draws up to it ; it is certain to catch, burns longer, and leaves a good ember." So wrote one who knew—Richard Jefferies, in "Bevis," that epic of boyhood. Having built the fire, the next thing is to light it. An old gipsy woman can light a fire in a gale, just as a sailor can always light his pipe, even in the cave of Æolus ; but the amateur is less dexterous. The smoke of the open-air fire is charged with memory. One whiff of it, and for a swift moment we are in sympathy with our remotest ancestors, and all that is elemental and primitive in us is awakened.

An American poet, R. H. Messinger, wrote :

"Old wood to burn !—
Ay, bring the hill-side beech
From where the owlets meet and screech,
And ravens croak ;
The crackling pine, and cedar sweet ;
Bring, too, a clump of fragrant peat,

Dug 'neath the fern ;
The knotted oak,
A faggot, too, perhaps,
Whose bright flame, dancing, winking,
Shall light us at our drinking ;
While the oozing sap
Shall make sweet music to our thinking."

There is no fire of coals, not even the blacksmith's, that can compare with the blazing fire of wood. The wood fire is primeval. Centuries before coals were dreamed of our rude forefathers were cooking their meat and gaining warmth from burning logs. The wood fire dates from Eden, or very little later. Coal is modern, is decadent. Look at this passage concerning fuel from an old Irish poem :—"O man," begins the lay, "that for Fergus of the feasts dost kindle fire, whether afloat or ashore never burn the king of woods. . . . The pliant woodbine, if thou burn, wailings for misfortunes will abound ; dire extremity at weapons' points or drowning in great waves will come after thee. Burn not the precious apple-tree." The minstrel goes on to name wood after wood that may or may not be burned. This is the crowning passage :—"Fiercest heat-giver of all timber is green oak, from him none may escape un-

hurt ; by partiality for him the head is set on aching, and by his acrid embers the eye is made sore. Alder, very battle-witch of all woods, tree that is hottest in the fight—undoubtedly burn at thy discretion both the alder and the white thorn. Holly, burn it green ; holly, burn it dry ; of all trees whatsoever the critically best is holly.” Could any one write with this enthusiasm and poetic feeling about Derby Brights and Silkstone—even the best Silkstone and the best Derby Brights ?

The care of a wood fire is, in itself, daily work for a man ; for far more so than with coal is progress continuous. Something is always taking place and demanding vigilance—hence the superiority of a wood fire as a beguiling influence. The bellows must always be near at hand, the tongs not out of reach ; both of them more sensible implements than those that usually appertain to coals. The tongs have no pretensions to brightness and gentility ; the bellows, quite apart from their function in life, are a thing of beauty ; the fire-dogs, on whose backs the logs repose, are fine upstanding fellows ; and the bricks on which the fire is laid have warmth and simpli-

city and an hospitable air to which decorative tiles can never attain. Again, there is about the logs something cleanly, in charming contrast to the dirt of coal. The wood hails from the neighbouring coppice. You have watched it grow : your interest in it is personal, and its interest in you is personal. It is as keen to warm you as you are to be warmed. Now there is nothing so impersonal as a piece of coal. Moreover, this wood was cut down and brought to the door by some good-humoured countryman of your acquaintance, whereas coal is obtained by miners—bad-tempered, truculent fellows that strike. Who ever heard of a strike among coppicers? And the smoke from a wood fire!—clean and sweet and pungent, and, against dark foliage, exquisite in colour as the breast of a dove. The delicacy of its grey-blue is not to be matched.

Whittier's "Snow Bound" is the epic of the wood-piled hearth. Throughout we hear the crackling of the brush, the hissing of the sap. The texture of the fire was "the oaken log, green, huge, and thick," and "rugged brush":—

“ Hovering near,
We watched the first red blaze appear,
Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam
On white-washed wall and sagging beam,
Until the old, rude-furnished room
Burst flower-like into rosy bloom.”

That italicised line—my own italics—is good. For the best fire (as for the best celery)—the fire most hearty, most inspired, and inspiring—frost is needed. When old Jack is abroad and there is a breath from the east in the air, then the sparks fly and the coals glow. In moist and mild weather the fire only burns, it has no enthusiasm for combustion. Whittier gives us a snowstorm :—

“ Shut in from all the world without,
We sat the clean-winged hearth about,
Content to let the north wind roar
In baffled rage at pane and door,
While the red logs before us beat
The frost line back with tropic heat ;
And ever, when a louder blast
Shook beam and rafter as it passed,
The merrier up its roaring draught
The great throat of the chimney laughed.”

But the wood fire is not for all. In London it is impracticable ; the builder has set his canon against it. Let us, then—those of us who are

able to—build our coal fires the higher, and flourish in their kindly light. Whether one is alone or in company the fire is potent to cheer. Indeed, a fire *is* company. No one need fear to be alone if the grate but glows. Faces in the fire will smile at him, mock him, frown at him, call and repulse ; or, if there be no faces, the smoke will take a thousand shapes and lead his thoughts by delightful paths to the land of reverie ; or he may watch the innermost heart of the fire burn blue (especially if there is frost in the air) ; or, poker in hand, he may coax a coal into increased vivacity. This is an agreeable diversion, suggesting the mediæval idea of the Devil in his domain.

Concerning Correspondence

Concerning Correspondence

NOW that four ounces of letter go for a penny, the complexities of life are almost over. In the old days, in the absence of a letter-balance, to decide upon the weight of an envelope was a matter involving the judgment of the whole household. One method of computing it was to hold the envelope in one hand, and an ounce of tobacco in the other; but that was not impeccable. Another was to employ the kitchen scales, which unhappily are often superior to mere accuracy, or they decline to be put in motion by anything less than a quarter of a pound. To-day, when a quarter of a pound is the standard, all such anxiety is past. Still, it is distressing to think how few people keep letter scales. There positively are houses which possess three bicycles and a typewriter, but no letter scales. On the other hand, there also are houses where every postal requisite is prominent. Every postal requisite means a little leather box from Bond Street, with "Stamps" in gold on the lid and two cedar-wood compartments within

for penny and halfpenny stamps; a stick of sealing wax and a seal; a leather box of string, also from Bond Street, armed with a tiny pair of scissors, so small that no normal fingers can hold them; a Postal Guide; letter scales; a wet pad for stamp-moistening, which is almost always overlooked until the tongue has done its work; and a photograph of Mr. Henniker Heaton. In such houses it is very hard to write letters.

The late Lewis Carroll once invented a stamp case—"The Wonderland"—and to accompany it he wrote a little pamphlet containing "Eight or Nine Wise Words about Letter Writing." As the unmethodical could not have a better guide they should at once acquire both pamphlet and case. "The Queen's laundress," Lewis Carroll assures us, "uses no other." Here are portions of some of these counsels:—

"If the Letter is to be in answer to another, begin by getting out that other letter and reading it through, in order to refresh your memory as to what it is you have to answer, and as to your correspondent's *present address*. . . . Next, *address and stamp the Envelope*. 'What! Before writing the *Letter*?' Most certainly. And I'll tell you what will happen if you don't. You will go on

writing till the last moment, and, just in the middle of the last sentence, you will become aware that 'time's up!'"

The methodical, of course, have no need of such hints; but as most of us are otherwise a few more rules may be quoted:—

"Don't fill *more* than a page and a half with apologies for not having written sooner! . . . *Write legibly. . . . Don't repeat yourself. . . .* When your letter is finished, read it carefully through, and put in any 'not' that you may chance to have omitted. (This precaution will sometimes save you from saying what you had not quite intended: *e.g.* suppose you had *meant* to write 'Dear Sir, I am not prepared to accept the offer you make me of your hand and heart.') When you say, in your letter, 'I enclose £5 bank-note,' or, 'I enclose John's letter for you to see,' get the document referred to—and *put it into the envelope*. Otherwise, you are pretty certain to find it lying about, *after the Post has gone!*"

And again:—

"If it should ever occur to you to write, jestingly, in *dispraise* of your friend, be sure you exaggerate enough to make the jesting *obvious*: a word, spoken in *jest*, but taken as *earnest*, may lead to very serious consequences. I have known it to lead to the breaking-off of a friendship. Sup-

pose, for instance, you wish to remind your friend of a sovereign you have lent him, which he has forgotten to repay—you might quite *mean* the words ‘I mention it, as you seem to have a conveniently bad memory for debts’ in jest ; yet there would be nothing to wonder at if he took offence at that way of putting it. But, suppose you wrote ‘Long observation of your career as a pickpocket has convinced me that my only hope for recovering that sovereign I lent you, is to say “Pay up, or I’ll summons yer !”’ he would indeed be a matter-of-fact friend if he took *that* as seriously meant !”

Lewis Carroll did not, however, offer a specimen letter as model. Here he sadly neglected his opportunities. There are publications which repair this omission with examples calculated to cover most of our commoner epistolary needs, but for ordinary life their language is a thought too stiff. In a much earlier compilation of a similar kind the language had other faults—a manual which appeared in 1618, the production either of the versatile Gervase Markham or of another man with the same initials. Its title is “Conceited Letters Newly Laid Open, or, A Most Excellent Bundle of New Wit: wherein is knit up together all the perfections, or Art of Episteling, by which the most ignorant

may with much modesty talke and argue with the best learned. A Worke varying from the Nature of former Presidents." This slender black-letter volume contains a number of letters couched in a style which it is perhaps well to have superseded. The specimens given are brief, but that they also are comprehensive may be gathered from the two that follow :—

A LETTER TO A FRIEND FOR HIS OPINION IN
DIVERS POINTS OF CONSIDERATIONS

"MY HONEST NED,—I pray thee write mee word by this bearer how thou doest, thy opinion of the World, of life and death, honesty and wit, and what comes into thy head when thou hast leisure to be idle. I long to heare from thee, to reade thy conceits, which, if they be of the old fashion, are better than the new forme : be what will be, to me it shall be welcome, and thyselfe, better whensoever I may see thee : for dull wits and addle heads so beate about the Market in this Towne, that I had rather goe a mile wide than keepe way with such wilde Geese : and so loath to trouble thee with trifling newes, to no good purpose, in the affection of a faithful heart : I rest

"Thine not mine,

"T. N."

This is the suggested reply :—

“KINDE HENRY,—To answere thy request, in a few words let me tell thee, for the World, I finde it a walke that soone wearieth a good spirit, this life is but a puffe, and Death but an abridgement of Time. Now for some notes I have taken of the World, and divers things in it : let me tell thee, that if all the wealth in the World were in one chest it would not buy one houre of Life ; if all the honesty of the world were in one heart, it would not buy one bit of Bread ; and if all the wit in the world were in one wicked pate, it would not buy one jot of grace : and therefore it is meete with Death at a meaner price, and to carry Money with Honesty, the better to goe to Market, and to joyne Grace with Wit, to find the high-way to Heaven. This is all for this time I have had leasure to thinke upon, as more comes into my Head, I will make you acquainted with it ; in the meantime, marke what I have written, and it will doe thee no hurt in reading : Farewell.

“Thine, or not mine owne,

“T. R.”

It is comfortable to think that people no longer write letters like that.

When it comes to practical counsel, the last stanza of the following poem by Mrs. Elizabeth Turner, an ancient preceptor of the young, offers the best instruction in correspondence that can be given :—

Concerning Correspondence 121

“ Maria intended a letter to write,
But could not begin (as she thought) to indite ;
So went to her mother with pencil and slate,
Containing ‘ Dear Sister,’ and also a date.

‘ With nothing to say, my dear girl, do not think
Of wasting your time over paper and ink ;
But certainly this is an excellent way,
To try with your slate to find something to say.

‘ I will give you a rule,’ said her mother, ‘ my dear,
Just think for a moment your sister is here,
And what would you tell her ? consider, and then
Though silent your tongue, you can speak with your
pen.’ ”

Speak with the pen!—that is what the best letter-writers do, whether they are literary artists, such as Lamb and Horace Walpole, Cowper and Keats, Edward FitzGerald and Shirley Brooks, or the unknown pen-gossips whose letters are flying hither and thither at this very moment, linking household to household and heart to heart. My own theory is that as good letters have been and are being written by obscure people as any that find their way into volumes. In many respects better, since there can be no taint of self-consciousness in their composition, no hint of posing, no thought of posterity, no attempt to do more than interest or amuse.

Talking on paper : that is letter-writing ; and it is because plain talk is very often better than brilliant talk that education is of little service to correspondents, and the best writers of books are by no means the best writers of letters. Many persons who spell phonetically on rules not of Pitman's but of Nature's framing are better correspondents than the Universities can produce. In some of the best letters I have seen, "has" was always spelt "as" and there were many small capital i's ; but how interesting and communicative and shrewd they were ! It is indeed time that a stand was made against the pedantic and prosaic tyranny of orthography. Take, for example, the following scrap of a letter from a gardener to his employer—were the gardener a man of education how much less picturesque would his message be ! The greenhouse would then have possessed no sex and no individuality. As it is, the greenhouse is a delightful monster :

"Sir Guy Edwardson Bart Im varry sorry to tell you that I cant do enaything with the green [greenhouse] I think he will kill every plant I have sometimes he will get varry hot and another time I cant get eney heat in him and we cant stape him from smoking so I dount know what I can do with him."

Again, incorrectness of spelling does not impair the force of the following exhaustive epistle, which was recently addressed to an Australian politician by a supporter, who, like the poor man in "Ecclesiastes" that helped the beleaguered king, was subsequently not remembered. He wrote, as reported by the Sydney *Bulletin* :—

"DEER SUR,—You're a dam fraud, and you know it. I don't care a rap for the billet or the muny either, but you could hev got it for me if you wasn't as mean as muk. Two pound a week ain't eny moar to me than 40 shillin's is to you, but I objekt to bein' maid an infurnil fool of. Soon after you was elected by my hard workin', a feller here wanted to bet me that You wouldn't be in the House moren a week before you maid a ass of yourself. I bet him a Cow on that as i thort you was worth it then. After i got Your Note sayin' you deklined to ackt in the matter i driv the Cow over to the Feller's place an' tole him he had won her.

"That's orl i got by howlin' meself Hoarse for you on pole day, an' months befoar. You not only hurt a man's Pride, but you injur him in Bizness. I believe you think you'll get in agen. I don't. An' what I don't think is of moar Konsequince then you imajin. I beleave you take a pleshir in cuttin' your best friends, but wate till the clouds roll by an' they'll cut you—just behind the Ear, where the butcher cut the pig. Yure no man. An' I doant

think yure much of a demercrat either. Go to hel. I lowers meself ritin to a skunk, even tho I med him a member of parlerment."

If this writer does not possess what Matthew Arnold called "a serviceable prose style," it would be puzzling to say who does.

In Mrs. Trevelyan's "Glimpses of Welsh Life and Character," are two letters which display a similar directness. They tell of a lover's quarrel. The lady wrote first:—

"I do send you these few lines to say that this do leave me in good health ; but I do not mean to walk out with you any more, because you did say as how I was as sweet as flummery, and after that you did go and tell Elizabeth how that she was sweeter than huney. Now, if so be I am only flummery you can put on your best cloathes and take to huney as soon as you like. I do mean to walk out with another chap next Sunday. He's huney and treakle put together. So no more from your late friend and future enemy.

"M. R."

The gentleman replied:—

"This is to warn you that if you do walk out with Huney and Treakle next Sunday I will break your legs. So no more whatever from your determined well-wisher.

"C. P."

The magazine of the General Post Office published recently the facsimile of a post-card which, owing to the absence of any address, was never delivered. It is a miracle of forcible statement. The communication ran:—

“I have received the hamper but no trotters the tripe is no good without the trotters you have had the money and I want the stuff and I want the trotters my money is as good as your stuff.”

The non-delivery of this message is one of life's little ironies.

In spite of entertaining arrays of primitive phonetics a prejudice in favour of correct spelling is, one fears, certain to linger : printers'-readers, parents, and schoolmasters play too important a part in the control of the world. As an instance of how deep-rooted this prejudice is, I might mention that in his recent work on Rowing, Mr. R. C. Lehmann, himself an athlete and humourist who ought to know better, urges correct spelling even upon oarsmen—oarsmen ! They are called upon to share in the author's contempt for the second note (and possibly the first) in the following concise

correspondence between a coach and one of his crew. The coach wrote :—

“DEAR — It has been reported to me that you broke training last night you were seen smoking not only a few wiffs but a whole pipe I have therefore decided to turn you out of the boat.

“Yours etc. . . .”

The reply ran thus :—

“DEAR — I am in reciet of your letter it is true that I smoked two whiffs (not ‘wiffs’ as you say) out of another man’s pipe but that’s all however I don’t want to row in your beastly boat.

“Yours etc. . . .”

If men who can manage an outrigger are not to be permitted to spell as they like, it is time we ceased to call England a free country.¹

Convention having oddly enough arranged that every one to whom we write, whether to a parent or an undertaker, shall be called “dear,” the beginning of letters, except with hyper-

¹ The curious circumstance to be noted among weak spellers is their inconsistency. The same word is often spelled both correctly and incorrectly in the space of a few lines. The following note was once pinned by a neighbour to my door :—

“No telegram has not come, the missus as not arrived.”

conscientious correspondents, is easy ; and the hyper-conscientiousness which boggles at the inaccurate employment of "dear" does not often persist after the teens. The true difficulty in most letters comes at the end, so wide is the choice of adverbs with which the writer may express his feelings towards the correspondent. On this subject Lewis Carroll says : " If doubtful whether to end with yours faithfully or yours truly or yours most truly . . . refer to your correspondent's last letter and make your winding-up *at least as friendly as his* : in fact, even if a shade *more* friendly it will do no harm." This is astute ; but it will not help in the case of the letter-writer who is answering nothing. Southey, it may be noted, always dropped in "God bless you."

The third-person note is one escape from the adverbial dilemma ; but only a genius can manipulate it. There is certain to be ambiguity among the pronouns. If our social system were not so ridiculously complex, the form would never have been introduced. In more cases than not the attempt is frankly abandoned after a few lines, as in the following reply from a farmer's wife concerning lodgings :—

"Mrs. Tullett wishes to tell Mrs. Smith that her rooms are now let, and I don't know how long it will be before they are vacant."

Experience teaches that it is best to adhere to the first person singular, even at the cost of appearing too familiar. By the way, among first-person-singular correspondence there is nothing to excel the conciseness, force, and directness of the following notes, which once passed between Mrs. Foote, the mother of the comedian, and Foote himself. Mrs. Foote wrote :—

"DEAR SAM,—I am in prison for debt ; come and assist your loving mother. E. FOOTE."

Sam replied :—

"DEAR MOTHER,—So am I ; which prevents his duty being paid to his loving mother by her affectionate son, SAM. FOOTE."

Millionaires correspond, one presumes, entirely by telegram. An objection to such a practice, apart from the detail of expense, is that in time one must come to talk like Alfred Jingle.

The antithesis of the telegram is the post-card, which has as little connection with true epistolary art. The fact that ingenious persons can crowd

many hundreds of words upon it is nothing in its favour. To crowd words is indeed a fault in correspondence ; to underline (a womanly accomplishment) is undesirable ; and to cross is wicked. "Remember," says Lewis Carroll, "the old proverb, 'Cross writing makes cross reading'"—adding slyly, "'The old proverb?' you say inquiringly. 'How old?' Well not so *very* ancient, I must confess. In fact, I'm afraid I invented it while writing this paragraph." Another bad habit is eccentric pagination, especially when indicative numbers by which it may be followed are omitted. Yet considering what a blessed thing the letter can be—and by letters I mean friendly, intimate pen-chat—any method, however odd, is permissible. Communicativeness is the grand test.

Concerning Animals



Concerning Animals

(From a Country Diary. May 1900.)

FOR the past two weeks I have been watching two nests in the garden—a thrush's and a long-tailed tit's. The thrush built silently and unobserved in a box tree, the first news we had of the nest being the noisy departure of the old bird as some one moved too near. Providence surely (one cannot help thinking) having done so much for birds, might have gone a step further and gifted them with the knowledge that when in danger it is better to lie low than to bustle away. However, off the thrush flew, and revealed five eggs. A day or so later the young birds hatched out.

The long-tailed tits worked entirely without secrecy. They sought their building site almost ostentatiously, and having settled upon it, conveyed their materials thither under our very eyes. Lichen from the apple trees formed the outer wall, and the lining was chiefly feathers from other birds, but whether picked up casually or fought for I know not. The building

operations lasted about ten days; and then came the eggs; and then, as I had foreseen from the beginning, the tragedy. For these foolish birds had set up their home in the hedge that runs by the footpath, in itself a ridiculous enough thing, and then, nominally for protective purposes, I suppose, had used a lichen that did not in the least correspond with the surrounding colour. All this I could have told them, but man is never so helpless as in his relations with birds. Perhaps it would have been kinder to destroy the nest's foundations at once; but only very strong people can be kind like that. All that was done was to call a committee to inquire into a means of hiding in some way the positively clamorous visibility of the nest. We walked up and down the path re-arranging the branches. Finally we decided that such matters are best left to Fate.

Fate, however, does not seem to think much of birds, for when, after an absence of two or three days, I went to see the nest again, every trace of it had vanished. Some village boys on a Sunday afternoon foray (Sunday afternoon being the deadliest time for all accessible creatures in these parts) had torn the nest

bodily from the hedge, and it is probably now on a neighbour's mantelpiece. So much for the toil of two weeks and the maternal solicitude of a week longer, and so much for my reputation among long-tailed tits as a gentleman.

I then went on to the thrush's nest, and behold! it lay on the ground, under the box tree, with one young bird dead beside it. Later John, the odd man, told the story: he had heard that morning an unusual noise in the direction of the nest, and had even stopped work (that extreme measure!) to see what it was; he found nothing, but could now tell that a cat must have attacked the birds, and the old one have done her best to repulse it, but without success.

Two tragedies in as many days, two families destroyed, two beautiful natural processes brought to nothing!

Of the two depredators the cat is the more monstrous, because whereas a boy unthinkingly, by a kind of sense of duty as a boy, takes a nest whenever he finds it, a cat mercilessly and deliberately marks a nest down, watches the growth of the young birds, and strikes at the precise moment when they are as big as they

can be before flying. I am not blaming the cat—that would be absurd ; but I am vexed with her for making my position as an oracle (to the young) so difficult this morning. For the story is not yet all told. I have to add that when the young thrushes were still babies, and before the long-tailed tit had laid at all, a little girl was brought here, and I was glad to be able to show her the nests and say something about the beautiful ways of nature. That was all right ; but this morning she came in again and was for seeing how both broods had progressed, and I had, of course, to tell her of our losses. So far as the tits were concerned the case presented little difficulty, for it comes naturally to even a little girl to think but lightly of the enormities of “horrid boys” (as we called them). But the cat? We have the misfortune to keep a cat here, and to be very fond of it, and the odds are quite heavy that it was this identical cat that consumed the thrushes and destroyed the nest. Under that impression the little girl refused to take any notice of the cat, nor could she understand how we can possibly continue to give such a creature love and shelter. She asked me the most direct ques-

tions on the matter, and I had no answers, and now I am a dishonoured thing.

And truly the whole thing is rather a puzzle. Why should a cat that is properly fed, and has its will of the mice, eat the birds of the air? Why should boys be unable to permit a bird to hatch out its eggs in peace? The law of the survival of the fittest hardly applies, for surely a thrush is as fit as a cat, and a long-tailed tit as fit as a boy. I know a dozen boys at least whom I would willingly exchange for the intimacy of a pair of these birds. Of course, it is all right, really. We all prey on one another, and all in turn are preyed upon. Probably those young thrushes had each eaten some scores of very estimable and life-loving worms; probably the tits had slain insects by the thousand, and equally probably our cat will one night be caught in a trap, and that village boy will enlist and some day fall on a battlefield with a Mauser bullet through his heart. A life for a life, says Nature. And yet one is puzzled still. When man opened the door to let humanity in, he let in a host of doubts and misgivings at the same time.

This is not our only tragedy. There is just

now at the farm a little brood of ducklings, who move about ever in a solid phalanx—a little yellow cloud which, though seven ducks compose it, you could at any time cover with a dinner napkin. I never saw such mobilisation. If unity were really strength, this company should be capable of anything. So one might think; and yet the contrary is the fact, for the motive which leads to this excessive gregariousness is not aggression but fear. Collectively, seven yellow ducklings, with weakly, twittering beaks and foolishly limp necks, are no stronger than one; but collectively their courage is greater; and just now they need courage or stimulation very badly. Because of the rats. A day or so ago the little band numbered nine, then it numbered eight, now seven, and to-morrow there may be only six. Hence there is something very pathetic in the sight of these fearful little brothers and sisters crowding against each other in their broad-day passage from one side of the yard to the other. If they feel thus when the sun shines, how must their little hearts beat at night!

Their fear of rats cannot, I think, be more intense than mine. Rats are to me what

snakes are to timid people in a snake country, or tarantulas in a tarantula country. The rat idea has a kindred hold on me, and has had ever since at school I first heard Southey's ballad of Bishop Hatto. The irresistibility of that army of rats swimming nearer and nearer to the castle in the river, and then up and up the stairs. . . . The rat is so terrible and so unclean. There is the story of the cornered rat that leaps for your throat. . . .

I met a rat a short time ago. I was descending a little hill, and he was climbing it, both of us in the middle of the road. I stood still and permitted him to pass—a great, surly, wicked, intent grandfather. A personified sin might easily have been figured thus. And yet a rat's private life, a rat's thoughts and conversation, may be far more wholesome than a rabbit's. (We don't really know anything.) Yet a thousand rabbits might play on the floor of my bedroom all night, and be hanged to them, while if a single rat so much as scratched beneath the flooring I would lose all sleep and all peace of mind. Such is association. Such is the rat idea. And such is the basis of my grief for those luckless ducklings.

The ducklings, thrushes, and tits are not the only miniature things that are finding life too hard a nut. Old John, on his way back from dinner the other day, found a cat in the midst of that ghastly game which cats play with their victims. The victim in this case was a baby rabbit. By a sudden movement John rescued the little creature and brought it to us. To transpose a box into a hutch was, as the novelists say, the work of an afternoon, and the rabbit was placed within it, together with some grass and some milk. But either the nervous shock, or the frequency with which callers came to the hutch to make inquiries, was too much for it, and the next morning its poor little body was cold. A rabbit that could recover from a cat's persecution would, indeed, have an organisation of iron.

The memory of the bright light of fear that inhabited that little rabbit's eyes has completely overturned all my good feeling for cats. I never was capable of very much, but such as there was has gone. Our kitten may frolic and curvet as she will, and twist her tiny body into a thousand attitudes of freakish and fascinating grace, but she leaves me without en-

thusiasm. I am tired of cats. Their rapacity is too continual, their cruelty too hideous, their beauty too superficial. Give me a plain, blundering, faithful-hearted, and true-eyed dog—a mongrel, even, if you will—before all the Persians of the Orient.

Not that one is profoundly in love with rabbits. Indeed, I cannot rise properly to the rabbit at all; I can only feel sorry for him. To respect him is impossible: his timidity goes beyond all bounds. Man may well be gratified to cause a stampede now and again among the smaller wild animals of his neighbourhood, but when the same stampede occurs every day among the same family, he deems it too much homage. Rooks can at enormous range distinguish between a walking-stick and a gun, between friend and foe, between Saturday and Sunday. Even sparrows discriminate. But rabbits are just fools. A footstep on the ground three hundred yards away starts them for home, no matter how succulent the greenery or how distant the burrow. One almost blushes to think what incredible distances one's punctual and harmless outgoing footfalls cause

rabbits to run every morning, and one's re-
turning steps every evening. In our case
the warren is hard by the path, and the
alarmed rabbit has therefore, in gaining safety,
to approach the enemy. "Go back, go
back, you little duffers! Finish your feeding
and compose yourselves!" one mentally ex-
claims. But it is to no purpose—here they
all come, hundreds of them, in an agony of
fear.

A few rabbits attempt courage, but never
a one achieves it. They sit up with alert
ears and gather together pluck to brave it
out; but by the time you are within fifty
yards their hearts fail them, and they break
for home. A frightened rabbit never runs
straight: he swerves and swerves. This prob-
ably he has learned from experience or tra-
dition, for it baulks the sportsman's aim.
Nature never did a crueller thing than when
she gave rabbits white tails: it makes it pos-
sible to shoot them long after it is too dark
to see any other quarry. "Twinkletails"
would be a pretty name for them. One
often sees nothing of a rabbit but its flashing
scut. Naturalists, I believe, are puzzled to

account for it, except as an advantage to aiming man.

Young rabbits have far more enterprise than old. Indeed, rabbits go off sadly, almost as sadly as lambs, which take on stupidity steadily with years. A peculiarity of the young rabbit that is approached from a distance from its abode is to lie still in the fern or grass and sham death or coma. An old rabbit has not wit enough to do even that. One imagines the old rabbit a very treasure-house of counsel and warnings. Man must get a desperately bad character in the warrens.

Our squirrels are less shy than the rabbits. They have more audacity, more grit, more daredevil. They let us approach within a few feet before moving, and then, quick as birds, with tail outspread, they dart to a tree. More often than not it is not the nearest tree : they keep enough composure to select. A squirrel seems never to lose his head ; a rabbit almost always does. When a squirrel runs he loops over the ground in the way the sea-serpent travels in pictures. Once the tree is gained, he scampers up a yard or two, on the side farthest from the enemy, and then pauses as suddenly as if an en-

chanter had bidden him turn to stone. Nothing in nature is more motionless than a wary, watchful squirrel. He clings to the bark, with cocked head and fearful eyes, a matter of half-a-minute before climbing to the first fork of the boughs. But to say climbing is a mistake ; it is not climbing : it is just running, or, better still, going. A squirrel goes up a tree.

The squirrel of the artist sits on its hind-quarters, under the shelter of its tail, and nibbles at the nut which its fore-paws hold. The position is, indeed, only one remove from saying grace, and reminds one of the child in Stevenson's verse who behaves "mannerly at table." But one does not often catch them in this attitude in the woods. There the squirrel is usually seen making little furtive dashes among the dead leaves on the ground: a tiny red animal, which, were it not for its tail-plume, might be taken at a distance for a rat. Now and then the nursery illustration is realised, but only seldom. Squirrels are very ready to be angry, and they are incapable of disguising their feelings. They are voluble as fishwives. If you would test the squirrel's powers of repartee, you must drive one to the branches of an isolated tree and then rap

the trunk with a stick. He will "answer back" as long as you stay there.

One pretty peculiarity touching the squirrel is that we do not associate it with age. We speak of a young rabbit or an old rabbit, a young horse, an old cow, a kitten or a cat, a puppy or a dog; but a squirrel, no matter what its development, is just a squirrel: that is to say, an indescribably wonderful woodland creature as far removed from our own life and ken as any English animal. The lyrical swiftness of the squirrel partakes of the miraculous; and this, combined with his elusiveness,—though he is a thousand strong in the neighbouring wood,—makes him a creature apart. Thousands of persons in this country have never seen a squirrel.

The squirrel is in the main invincibly and joyously untameable, although many a man has kept one as a pet. Compared with a squirrel of the beech grove the wildest rabbit is domesticated. But, indeed, beside the squirrel all the four-footed creatures of the field are pedestrian, commonplace. Even the hare, with its incredible celerities, is dull compared with this brilliant aeronaut. The

squirrel must be emboughed if he is to show in brightest pin. On the ground he is swift and graceful, but his tail impedes instead of assisting him ; in a tree, or in mid-air between two trees, he is a miracle of joyous pulsating life, a bird with an additional infusion of nervous fluid, a poem in red fur.

Concerning the Miseries
of Life

Concerning the Miseries of Life

WHAT, my poor Sir, are the senses, but five yawning inlets to hourly and momentary molestations?—What is your House, while you are *in* it, but a prison filled with nests of little reptiles—of insect-annoyances—which torment you the more because they cannot kill you? and what is the same house, when you are *out* of it, but a shelter, out of reach, from the hostilities of the skies?—What is the Country, but a sandy desert at one season, or a swallowing quagmire at another?—What the Town, but an *upper* Tartarus of smoke, and din?—What are Carriages, but cages upon wheels?—What are Riding-horses, but purchased enemies, whom you pamper into strength, as well as inclination, to kick your brains out?—What are Theatres, but licensed repositories for ill-told lies, or stifling shambles for the voluntary sacrifice of time, health, money, and morals?—A Senatorial Debate (when you have fought your way to it), what is it but a national Main of Cocks?—What are Games, Sports, and Exercises, but devices of danger and fatigue to the performers, and schools of surgery to the practitioner who may happen to look on?—What are Society and Solitude, but, each, an alternate hiding-place from the persecutions of the other?—Libraries!—What are they

but the sepulchres of gaiety, or conservatories for the seedlings of disease?—Nay, to descend still lower, what are the indispensable processes of Eating and Drinking, but practical lectures on the art of spoiling food?—or what even the familiar operations of Dressing and Undressing, but stinging remembrances of the privileged nakedness of the savage?”

At the beginning of this century a humorous work appeared, entitled “The Miseries of Human Life; or, the Groans of Samuel Sensitive and Timothy Testy,” from the introduction to which the above passage is taken. The book was so popular that a sequel was called for. The two ran through several editions in a few years, and won the commendation of Sir Walter Scott, who wrote to the publisher saying that “‘The Miseries of Human Life’ contain some wit, much humour, and perfect originality.” The authorship, as is always the case when an anonymous work is widely read, was attributed to several hands, a circumstance which the true author explained in a private “groan” appended to the second edition: “Publishing a book incog.—with the misery annexed of seeing one’s literary delinquencies accumulated on the heads of the guiltless.”

Concerning the Miseries of Life 151

His name was eventually printed on the title-page of the sixth edition, the writer turning out to be the Rev. James Beresford, fellow of Merton and rector of Kebworth in Leicestershire, who died in 1841.

"The Miseries of Human Life" was confessedly a satire. Yet it is unlikely that it had any ameliorating effect, partly because grumbling is to the grumbler so sweet a luxury, misery to the miserable so dear a happiness, and for other reasons to be explained later. Mr. Beresford had instead the satisfaction of seeing his point entirely missed by a great many persons—which is a penalty (or privilege) of the ironical mind—one of whom issued an "Antidote to the Miseries of Human Life" in the shape of a book recounting the "History of the Widow Placid and her daughter Rachel." This work, the author of which was a Mr. Corp, stated by direct means what Mr. Beresford had laboured to convey obliquely; but Mr. Corp was without humour, and in his pages the moral superiorities of the Quakers were a thought too emphatically insisted upon for the work to have popularity.

The scheme of "The Miseries of Human

Life" is preposterous enough. Two old gentlemen, Mr. Timothy Testy and Mr. Samuel Sensitive, vie in recording and praising the causes of discomfort. As Bouvard and Pécuchet in Flaubert's satire sought knowledge, so do these warped enthusiasts seek tribulation in the daily round. Testy is the more thorough: impatient and intolerant, he feels acutely and profoundly. Sensitive stands aside and notes more objectively. Testy, as himself explains, shrinks more from a hard knock, Sensitive from a hard word. In the end, Sensitive is turned from the pursuit of misery to philosophical resignation and even optimism; Testy dies in a fit. Other characters are Ned Testy, an Eton boy and confirmed punster with a devilish memory for classical tags, and Mrs. Testy, who remains a shadow. Regular meetings are held, at which long lists of miseries are read out by the old gentlemen, while Ned Testy occasionally interpolates a pun. The range is wide, covering miseries of town and country, of travel and reading, of eating and visiting, of games and theatres; in fact, including most phases of life.

Although ninety years have passed since it

Concerning the Miseries of Life 153

was written, Mr. Beresford's book is still in the main true. The more subtle "groans" are peculiarly so; proving once again how incorrigibly stationary human nature is. Take, for instance, this, which is perhaps the most genuine misery (most of the examples being but annoyances or discomforts) in the two volumes :—

"Grating the sensibility, the prepossessions, the self-love, the vanity, &c., of the person to whom you are speaking, by some unguarded words, which, as soon as you have uttered them, you would die to *eat*; then, floundering and plunging deeper and deeper, in your wild and confused attempts to recover yourself."

And sensitive persons will appreciate this :—

"Stopping in the street to address a person whom you know rather too well to pass him without speaking, and yet not quite well enough to have a word to say to him—*he* feeling himself in the same dilemma; so that, after each has been asked and answered the question, 'How do you do, sir?' you stand silently face to face, *à propos* to nothing, during a minute, and then part in a transport of awkwardness."

And here are one or two other trials of mind,

which we must owe to Mr. Beresford's own experience, for neither Testy nor Sensitive knew anything of shyness. Just as adventures are to the adventurous, so are miseries to the shy. A nervous, retiring, sensitive man knows all the petty stings of life. Here is a penalty of diffidence :—

“Standing off and on in the street for half-an-hour (though in the utmost haste), while the friend with whom you are walking talks to *his* friend whom you meet, and to whose conversation you are delicately doubtful whether you ought to be a party.”

Some men do not mind repeating their good things a score of times in the same company. The diffident wit is confronted with the following problem :—

“After having said what you conceive to be a good thing, but which you fear that none of the company heard, finding yourself reduced to the horrible alternative of losing the credit of your wit, or of repeating your *bon-mot*, with the risk of its having been heard before and disapproved ; and, in *this* case, with the certainty of being thought both a fool and a coxcomb.”

The two old gentlemen of the dialogues are not often so penetrative. In the main they

Concerning the Miseries of Life 155

feel rather with their bodies than their minds. It is well, then, to abide with them a little longer while they are in this unusually acute condition. Here are other universal groans:—

“In trying to laugh at the heavy joke of a good man, but a vile jester (*‘hilaris cum pondere virtus’*), producing only that sort of spurious chuckle or laborious ha ! ha ! which you feel must betray you, even to the worthy wag himself, though not at all of a suspicious nature ; then, on being loudly asked by one of the company, ‘What is the joke?’ being driven to confess that you ‘do not know’—as, in truth, you do not ; having laughed gratuitously (without hearing, or taking, what was said), merely to pleasure the old gentleman, whose smiling eye thrown round the table at the conclusion of his speech had levied a general tax upon the muscles of his friends.

“In conversation—inadvertently touching the string which you know will call forth the longest story of the flattest proser that ever droned.

“After telling, at much length, a scarce and curious anecdote, with considerable marks of self-complacency at having it to tell, being quietly reminded by the person you have been so kindly instructing, that you had it—*from himself*.

“After having left a company in which you have been galled by the raillery of some wag by profes-

sion—thinking, at your leisure, of a repartee which, if discharged at the proper moment, would have blown him to atoms.

“On your return from an excursion to North Wales, the lakes, &c., being asked by the first friend you meet whether you saw . . . —naming the most celebrated spot in the whole tour—the only place, however, which, by some villainous mischance, you did *not* see.”

This is very common. Beau Brummell’s method of leaving his impressions of scenery in the charge of a servant was perhaps more wisely decided upon than one has supposed.

The foregoing are more than favourable specimens of Mr. Beresford’s observation. Here are three good “groans” dealing with miseries that come but rarely, and to many persons never at all :—

“While you are laughing, or talking wildly to yourself, in walking, suddenly seeing a person steal close by you, who, you are sure, must have heard it all ; then, in an agony of shame, making a wretched attempt to *sing*, in a voice as like your talk as possible, in hopes of making your hearer think that you had been *only* singing all the while.

“At breakfast—hearing a good old lady detail

Concerning the Miseries of Life 157

at full length her last night's long dull dream, affording nothing more remarkable than the usual chaos of conclusions without premises, and that sort of topsy-turvy tangled account of the flattest incidents of common life which we could all give every morning, if we did not make all possible haste to forget the nonsense, as soon as we have recovered our senses. But this is not all; for as soon as she has at length brought her idiotic narrative to an end, and you begin to breathe again, your attention is once more laid in irons, while she buckles to the *interpretation* of it, in all its parts.

“When you have imprudently cooled yourself with a glass of ice, after dancing very violently, being immediately told by a medical friend that you have no chance for your life but by continuing the exercise with all your might;—then, the state of horror in which you suddenly cry out for ‘Go to the devil and shake yourself,’ or any other such frolicsome tune, and the heart-sinking apprehensions under which you instantly tear down the dance, and keep rousing all the rest of the couples (who, having taken no ice, can afford to move with less spirit)—incessantly vociferating, as you ramp and gallop along, ‘Hands across, sir, for heaven’s sake.’ ‘Right and left, or I’m a dead man,’” &c., &c.

This is tolerable fun. If Mr. Beresford kept always at such a level his book would still

be amusing reading. But he did not. He was often unworthily trivial and even silly. He weakened his satire by including the miseries of foolish persons, which do not, of course, merit attention. Such groans as the following are inoperative as satire, because the ordinary man would not so expose himself:—

“In attempting to spring carelessly, with the help of one hand, over a five-barred gate, by way of showing your activity to a party of ladies behind you (whom you affect not to have observed), blundering upon your nose on the other side.

“On entering the room, to join an evening party composed of remarkably grave, strict, and precise persons, suddenly finding out that you are drunk; and (what is still worse) that the company has *shared* with you in the discovery—though you thought you were, and fully intended to be, rigidly sober.”

People rarely do such things. A social satirist is mistaken also in including examples which are so uncommon that one may easily go through a long life and never experience or even hear of them. Such as this:—

“After waiting an hour for a friend’s Cremona, for which you had sent your servant, seeing it at length brought in by him—in fragments.”

Concerning the Miseries of Life 159

This also is too infrequent an occurrence to be worth comment :—

“On your entrance at a formal dinner party, in reaching up your hat to a high peg in the hall, bursting your coat, from the arm-hole to the pocket.”

Between miseries that are of one's own causing and miseries that outside circumstances produce, a distinction should be drawn. Such an impersonal affliction as the lateness of a train would not be worth noting in any book of this kind; nor so momentous and real a calamity as the breaking of one's leg. These are too objective or too serious. Mental miseries are almost the only ones worthy the notice of the philosopher. Miseries for which one cannot reproach oneself belong to a less important class, as the Domestic Psychologist who ought to undertake the revision and improvement of this book would, of course, point out. Nearly all railway annoyances belong to that category. Testy and Sensitive, by the way, were strong on the miseries of travelling. Many of their charges against stage coaches have only to be transferred to cabs and rail.

way compartments to be applicable now. Thus, the groan—

“A coach window-glass that will not be put up when it is down, nor down when it is up,”

may be amplified to “Travelling in cold weather with a fellow-passenger who insists on having the window open ; or, in hot, with one who demands that it shall be shut.” We all know such people. “In winter, finding that the stock of foot-warmers is just exhausted”—this is a true misery. Another is: “Fitting the rhythmic beat of the train to a form of words which you cannot forget”—a horror which Mark Twain has carried to the bitter end in his story, “Punch, Brothers, Punch.” The miseries of cabs are mostly financial. Nothing is much worse for an economical nervous woman than to ride an eighteen-penny distance with no coin less than half-a-crown in her pocket.

To the travel section belong of course the miseries of inns, which still are too much with us. The following groan, although tiresome in its long-windedness, is valuable as a picture.

“In the room of an inn to which you are confined by the rain, or by sudden indisposition, the whole

Concerning the Miseries of Life 161

day, finding yourself reduced to the following *delassemens de cœur*; and first for the *Morning*: examining the scrawled window-panes, in hopes of curious verses, and finding nothing more *piquant* than 'I love pretty Sally Appleby of Chipping-Norton;' 'Sweet Dolly Meadows;' 'A. B., G. M., T. S., &c., &c., dined here July the 4th, 1739;' 'I am very *unappy*.—Sam Jennings;' 'Life at best is but a jest;' 'Wm. Wilkins is a fool,' with 'So are you' written under it; '*dam pit*' [a political sentiment] &c., &c., together with sundry half-finished initials scratched about.

"Then for your *Evening* recreations: after having for the twentieth time held a candle to the wretched prints or ornaments with which the room is hung, such as female personifications of the Four Seasons, or the Cardinal Virtues, daubed over anyhow with purple, red, and raspberry-cream colours; or a series of halfpenny prints, called 'Going out in the Morning,' 'Starting a hare,' 'Coming in at the Death,' &c.; or a Jemmy Jessamy lover in a wood, in new boots, but without spurs, whip, horse, or hat, with his hair full-dressed, on one knee, in the dirt, before a coy maypole Miss in an old-fashioned riding-dress; both figures being partly coloured and partly plain; or a goggling wax Queen bolt upright in a deep glass case, among the minikin pillars of a tawdry temple, wreathed with red foil, tinsel, and green varnished leaves; or the map of England, with only about four counties and *no* towns in it, worked in a sampler by the landlady's

youngest daughter, 'aged 10 years'; or a little fat plaster man on the chimney-piece, with his gilt cocked-hat at the back of his head and a pipe in his mouth, being the centre figure to a china Shakspeare and Milton, in harlequin jackets, at the two extremities—after getting all this by heart (I say), asking in despair for some books, which, when brought, turn out to be Bracken's 'Farriery,' three or four wrecks of different spelling-books, 'Gauging made Easy,' a few odd volumes of the 'Racing Calendar,' an *abridged* '*Abridgment* of the History of England' in question and answer, with half the leaves torn out and the other half illegible with greasy thumbing, an old list of Terms, Transfer days, &c., with Tax Tables, &c., &c., in each of which you try a few pages, nod over them till nine o'clock, and then stumble to bed in a cloud of disgust."

As a contrast to the foregoing let us quote Mr. Beresford in more epigrammatic moments. Here are some concise groans :—

"The interval between the dentist's confession that your tooth will be very difficult to draw, and the commencement of the attempt.

"Taking a step more, or a step less, than you want, in going up or down stairs.

"The task of inventing a new dinner every morning devolving on *you*, in the long absence of your wife.

Concerning the Miseries of Life 163

“Attempting to open the stiff blade of a rusty knife at a well-worn notch with a short thumb nail.”

We may make other changes “to date.” Neither Mr. Testy nor Mr. Sensitive seems to have smoked. Had they done so their groans would have been fewer, for no good smoker has cause for grumbling when once his pipe is alight, and no good smoker foresees cause for grumbling without lighting his pipe as a prophylactic or palliative. But both the old gentlemen took snuff. Here is a groan born of the habit :—

“On the road, suddenly finding your stock of snuff exhausted ; then, on flying to a shop in a country town at which you are told they have all sorts—nothing but Scotch.”

To-day we have similar tobacco trials. “Nothing but shag” is the disheartening reply which many a weary traveller receives in a village shop or wayside inn. “No matches” is another tobacco trial. “To be offered a cigar by a man notorious for his poor judgment of the leaf”—that is another. “Letting a choice cigar out” is one more ; but the wise man does not do that.

Most of Mr. Beresford’s London miseries hold

good at this moment. This is still within every one's compass :—

“Walking, side by side, half over London, with a cart containing a million of iron bars, which you must out-bray, if you can, in order to make your companion hear a word you have further to say upon the subject you were earnestly discussing before you were joined by this infernal article of commerce.”

For a cart containing iron bars, one may read a cart passing over a stone road. Albany Street was once among the worst. “Riding in a ’bus over such stones, with an old, inquisitive, and loud-voiced friend of the family” is even worse. Another street misery not noted by Mr. Beresford is : “Perceiving some one advancing towards you with whom you will, you feel convinced, avoid a collision only with great difficulty and loss of dignity” : such an embarrassment of similar purposes as that described by Sterne in “The Sentimental Journey.” Another is : “Meeting on a muddy day an Indian file of policemen who move onward like a tidal wave and turn into the gutter all who hesitate to take the wall.”

Here are some theatre groans, still pertinent :

Concerning the Miseries of Life 165

“On going to the play, to see a favourite performer, to be told, at the drawing-up of the curtain (as you had augured from the rueful bow of the speaker), that he or she is suddenly taken ill or dead, and that Mr. — or Miss — (the hacks of the house) has kindly undertaken to try and read the part at five minutes’ notice.

“In the pit at the opera, a broad-shouldered fellow, seven feet high, seated immediately before you during the whole of the ballet.”

To these the modern Testy would add “The matinée hat”; and the modern Sensitive, “The affliction of having, when visiting a comic opera purely for the fun of it, to endure the repetition of each of the saccharine songs of the tenor.” “Finding that a farce is not amusing” is a sickening and frequent grief. Mr. Beresford has this :—

“Going to see a party of strolling players on the strength of an encouraging report that they are execrable; but finding them so *intolerably tolerable* that even the most heart-breaking scenes of their tragedy scarcely afford you one hearty laugh.”

A very slight change modernises the following groan :—

“After having sent from the other end of the kingdom to Hookham’s for a quantity of well-

chosen books, all particularly named, receiving in return, six months afterwards, a cargo of novels, of *their own* choice, with such titles as 'Delicate Sensibility,' 'Disguises of the Heart,' 'Errors of Tenderness,' &c. &c. Then, if you venture in despair on a few pages, being edified in the margin by such pencilled commentaries as the following: 'I quite agree in this sentiment,' 'How frequently do we find this to be the case in real life!' 'But why did she let him have the letter?' &c. &c., concluded by the reader's general decision upon the merits of the book, stamped in one oracular sentence; for example, 'This is a very good novel'; or, to the horror and confusion of the author, if he should ever hear of the critique, 'What execrable stuff!'"

Substitute Mudie's for Hookham's, and, with modifications, the case applies to-day. Here, however, Mr. Beresford injures himself by exaggeration and spleen. A quietly humorous tone would have been so much better. More annoying still is it to receive in one's library parcel several of the novels which one returned last month. "To find a volume of short stories where one expected a long novel" is a grief. "Cutting a book with the finger" has a place in the *Miseries*. "Cutting a paper with the flat of the hand or a railway ticket" should also

Concerning the Miseries of Life 167

be mentioned ; and under the miseries of reading might be put this : " Having a passion for truth, and a sane admiration of Browning, and being asked casually, ' What do you think of Browning ? ' "

The book is weak in the games section. The miseries of cricket, for example, are not summed up in the following " groans " :—

" At cricket, after a long and hard service of watching out, bowled out at the first ball. Likewise, cricket on very sloppy ground, so that your hard ball presently becomes muddy, sappy, and rotten ; a jarring bat ; a right-hand bat for a left-handed player ; a hat, *vice* stumps."

And—

" Cricket by two, so that, when *in*, you have to run a quarter of a mile behind the wicket after every ball you miss—your antagonist delivering it with the force of a cannon."

Cricketers know more of grief than this. The reviser of Mr. Beresford's book would have to remember " The ordeal of walking back to a crowded pavilion after an innings which consisted of exactly one ball." It is then that Mr. Alfred Lyttelton's piteous plea for an

underground passage returns with fullest force. "Bowling for catches, and seeing all those catches dropped"; "Being in, when runs are wanted, with a man who has no judgment or courage in running, and who refuses to call with any decision"; "Being set for a long innings and watching the batsmen at the other end go out like street lamps in the early morning"; "Being in with easy bowling—or, as it is now idiomatically called, 'tosh'—with a selfish bat who consistently collars the over"; "Bowling to a hitter with such an eye that he can make a full-pitch or half volley out of anything" (in short, "Bowling to Mr. Jessop"); "Feeling conscious in an emergency that the only bowling that would be of any avail is your own, but having no friend at court to suggest as much to the captain"—these are miseries which most cricketers have experienced.

Fortunately this book was compiled before golf and cycling had caught the world. Mr. Testy on a bicycle, Mr. Sensitive with a cleek, are not to be imagined. How the one would have amplified that dread calamity, a puncture! How the other would have dilated upon a grounded club! Such cycling miseries as

Concerning the Miseries of Life 169

“Struggling against a head wind”; “Purchasing a new cycle at market price the day before some one offers you his own machine, a better one, at half the cost”; “Riding upon a vocal and complaining saddle”; “Running short of oil on the outskirts of a town whose police are notoriously vigilant”; “Learning to ride in the presence of the local satirist”—Mr. Testy and Mr. Sensitive between them would have fastened upon these like terriers upon rats and have worried them as remorselessly. But our Domestic Psychologist would, we fancy, find that sports and games were eating up too much space. Billiards is beset with misery. Croquet is a perpetual humiliation for some one. Even halma harasses. While, when we come to more serious pastimes, such as angling and riding, the groans are of appalling variety. Mr. Beresford knew what riding involved. Thus:—

“At the moment when your horse is beginning to run away with you, losing your stirrup, which runs away too, and bangs your instep raw as often as you attempt to catch it with your foot.”

Finally let me quote a budget of miscellaneous groans:—

"A fellow who treats you in all respects (the fee excepted) like his physician, unreservedly laying before you, while he is helping you at dinner, all the minutest particulars of his most revolting ailments, from the first attack down to the present moment.

"Dropping in upon a friend at the dinner-hour, upon the strength of his *general* invitation, and at once discovering, from the countenance and manner of his lady, that you'd better have waited for a *particular* one.

"A tea-pot which *won't* pour except through the *top*—what you intend for your cup trickling down your fingers, into your sleeve, and over the cloth.

"Your watch-key having worn itself *round*, so that it amuses you with spinning by itself upon its square pin, of which it was once so fond as never to think of moving without it.

"Pushing up your shirt sleeves for the purpose of washing your hands, but so ineffectually, that in the midst of the operation they fall and bag down over your wet, soapy wrists.

"The hypochondriacal impression, under which you fancy, as you lie in bed, that your fingers are each as large as a woolsack, legs of the size of church pillars, pillow bigger than the bed of Ware, &c., &c., and all this affair seeming to grow worse and worse every moment.

"In attempting to take up the poker softly (an

Concerning the Miseries of Life 171

invalid asleep in the room), throwing it violently down, sociably accompanied by the tongs and shovel in its fall.

“Being compelled by a deaf person, in a large and silent company, to repeat some very washy remark three or four times over, at the highest pitch of your voice.”

Best of all, that is to say, cruellest of all, is this :—

“At a long table, after dinner, the eyes of the whole company drawn upon you by a loud observation that you are strikingly like Mrs. or Miss —, particularly when you smile.”

To these, taken from all parts of Mr. Beresford's two volumes, every one would be able to add a few.

The virtue of such a book resides in its universality. An observer who, in this way, recorded nothing but the unsolicited, inevitable woes that afflict the body and soul of an ordinarily sensible and sensitive person, would be contributing something to the science of living. Had Mr. Beresford confined himself to these, his compilation would steadily have passed into new editions until

this day. But he made the mistake of choosing two abnormal persons for his principal mouthpieces and indulging in continual exaggeration. The result is that the book has very little value except as the basis of a better and as an example of the kind of humour that was enjoyed at the beginning of this century. Also as one of the lighter books that pleased Scott.

"The Miseries of Human Life" died with its own generation, although some time in the fifties an American writer took the book in hand, adding miseries of his own, Americanising the text, and multiplying Ned Testy's puns. His effort is not valuable. Since then the book has remained undisturbed, and will so remain until our Domestic Psychologist makes it the germ of a catalogue of minor normal woes, mental rather than physical. Such a catalogue could not but be interesting.

Concerning a Gentle
Adviser

Concerning a Gentle Adviser

I HAVE called Gervase Markham a gentle adviser, because the quality of gentleness has such prominence in his pages. His sentences have a gentle euphony, his poetry has a gentle melancholy, his attitude to life, as we glimpse it between the lines, is one of gentleness. In his treatises he does not command—or, as we say of small tyrants, “order about”—he advises, suggests, in a word, persuades. “If you will roast a Piece of fresh Sturgeon,” says he, in the cookery, by way of courteous opening, and then come the directions; and, “If you will Roast a chine of beef, a loyn of Mutton, a Capon and a

¹ Gervase Markham (1566–1636), soldier, man of letters, dilettante, and the author of very many manuals of farriery, sport, agriculture, horticulture, cookery, medicine, and the home arts generally. “Which,” says he, in one of his prefaces, if men will “once take pains to read them, they will after affirm them worthy of choice bosomes.” The volume from which my quotations are made is a compendium entitled “Country Contentments.”

lark, all at one instant, and at one fire, and have all ready together and none burnt," do so and so.

Not content with his own mild persuasion, the gentle Markham would have us all gentle too, and herein, I think, lies his peculiar attraction. He presupposes an affectionate nature to be a property of his reader. To the owner of a pack of hounds he addresses this passage (in which, as in that which follows, the italics are mine): "You shall not suffer your Whelps to suck above two months at the most, but then you shall Wean them, and if the house you keep be of great receipt, and many servants, you shall let your Cook bring up your best Whelps, and your Dairy-maid your second-best, and the rest you shall put forth among your friends or Tenants, *according unto the love you possess in the Country.*" That a man may keep hounds and yet possess no love in the country, is a state of things beyond Markham's ken.

And thus coaxingly is the erring Hawk to be brought into the way of rectitude: "All Hawks generally are to be manned after one manner, that is to say, by watching and keeping them

from sleep, by a continuall carrying them upon your fist, and by a most familiar stroking and playing with them, with the wing of a dead fowl, or such like, and by often gazing and looking them in the face, *with a loving and gentle countenance*, and so making them acquainted with the man."

And in breaking-in or riding a horse, we must never forget to cherish the animal. See how prettily Markham instructs us: "Now of cherishings, there are generally in use but three, as first the voice, which being delivered smoothly and lovingly, as crying *holla so boy, there boy there*, and such like, gives the Horse both cheerfulness of Spirit and a knowledge that he hath done well, then the hand by clapping him gently on the Neck or Buttock, or giving him grass or other food to eat, after he hath pleased you; and lastly, the big end of the Rod, by rubbing him therewith upon the withers or main, which is very pleasing and delightful to the Horse." The antitheses to these cherishing cries are, *Ha villain, carridro, diablo*, delivered sharply and roughly. Such like threatenings terrify the horse, says Markham, and make him afraid to disobey.

But it is not often that Markham writes of severe measures, and then with apparent distaste. If, however, the husbandman is to progress and the sportsman justify himself, animals must be killed. Recognising the necessity, Markham lays down rules accordingly, but still with gentleness. There are, for example, certain "ravenous creatures" which destroy fish, such as the otter and the "hern," and these, in the interest of the angler, must be removed. Among them is "the King's Fisher (which is a small green bird) . . . and the way to take him is to mark his haunt where he commonly sitteth, which is ever in some bush next the river; then set a little cradle of limed straws about his seat, and they will quickly take him, for he seldome changeth, but ever sitteth upon one bough." Alas, there are few of these small green birds left to sit in England now!

Towards the whole world Markham seems to have entertained a tenderness. Of the well-being of his fellow-men he was no less solicitous. In his "Farewell to Husbandry," the directions as to the husbandman's labours for the several months of the year are rounded off with a thoughtful word of advice as to the

care of his health. "In January he must keep warm, and rather with exercise than sauce increase his appetite." In February, March, and April he shall "bleed as art may direct." In May he is bidden "beware of Mountebanks, and old wives' tales, for the latter hath no ground, and the other no truth but apparent cosenage." In September he must shun, "as death," riot and surfeit. In October he may "use all moderate sports, for anything now is good which reviveth the spirits." In December we find this entry: "And lastly for your health, eat meats that are hot and nourishing, drink good wine that is neat, sprightly and lusty; keep the body well clad, and thy house warm, forsake whatsoever is flegmatick, and banish all care from thine heart, for nothing is more unwholesome than a troubled spirit."

Gervase Markham, himself an Elizabethan,¹

¹ Isabel Markham, great-aunt to Gervase, was one of the maids of honour thrown into prison with the Princess Elizabeth. Afterwards she became the lady of Sir John Harrington, Elizabeth's godson, who "firste thoughte her fayre as she stode at the Princesse's windowe in goodlye attyre and talkede to dyvers in the courte yarde." He called her "Sweete Isabella Markham," and wrote poems to her during his courtship, and

had a brimming share of the Elizabethan gift of enthusiasm. Words were to these early writers like a new toy to a happy child, and they played with them with as much delight. The old spontaneous joy has passed. For the winsomeness, the comeliness, that marked the literature of that early untroubled day of rebirth, we look almost in vain. The world is no longer new every morning as once it was.

Throughout his books Markham displays this zest: the subject upon which he is for the moment engaged is the finest subject in the world. High praise, when it is honest, is the pleasantest of reading, and hence part of Markham's charm. Superlatives are a little out of

after they were married. The father of Gervase was Robert Markham, the nephew of Sweet Isabella. He was twice High Sheriff of Nottingham and thrice Knight of the Shire, and was thus commemorated in Elizabeth's couplet made upon her Nottinghamshire knights:—

“Gervase the gentle, Stanhope the stout,
Markham the lion, and Sutton the lout.”

If, as may without violence be supposed, Gervase Markham was named after “Gervase the Gentle,” the boy's assumption of the characteristic as well as of the name is curious.

date with us. The finest edge has been taken from life ; the sun is, in our day, too high in the heavens for the ancient energy and zest. The Elizabethans knew the glory of his rising, when the dewdrops glistened, and the lark sang at heaven's gate, and enthusiasm inhabited the clear light.

Gervase Markham now and again essayed poetry, but with small measure of success. The verse was diffuse and over-saccharine, avoiding statements. Yet there was little reason that he should feel discouragement at his inability to sing with the highest. He had all the enthusiasm of the poet, although in verse he was powerless to give it expression. Like so many other men, he was a better poet in life than in literature. This gift of appreciation enabled him to detect the finest, most picturesque feature in whatever he bent his mind upon. To a man not similarly endowed, when writing upon hounds and their treatment, such a passage as the following would, for example, never have been possible :—

“ If you would have your Kennel for sweetness of cry, then you must compound it of some large dogs, that have deep, solemn Mouthes, and are swift in spending, which must, as it were, bear the

base in the consort ; then a double number of roaring, and loud ringing Mouthes, which must bear the counter tenor ; then some hollow plain sweet Mouthes, which must bear the mean or middle part. And so with these three parts of Musick you shall make your cry perfect : and herein you shall observe that these Hounds thus mixt, do run just and even together, and not hang off loose from one another, which is the vilest sight that may be ; and you shall understand that this composition is best to be made of the swiftest and largest deep-mouthed dog, the slowest middle-siz'd dog, and the shortest-legg'd slender dog, amongst these you may cast in a couple or two small single beagles, which as small trebles may warble amongst them : the cry will be a great deal the more sweet."

How ridiculous for a man who could write such a passage as this, or compose some of the cookery recipes that follow, ever to wish for fame as a poet ! But often we stumble on our best things.

Anything less dramatic than Markham's "Tragedie of Sir Richard Grinville" cannot well be imagined. It is wanting in every kind of force, and the knight himself resembles more

Concerning a Gentle Adviser 183

nearly an enfeebled missionary than a sea-ravener. Markham's gentleness here became his enemy. Fortunately we have Lord Tennyson's ballad :—

“And Sir Richard said again : ‘We be all true English
men,
Let us hang those dogs of Seville, the children of the
Devil,
For I never turn'd my back upon Don or Devil yet.’”

That, you remember, was the beginning of the fight. To such a tune men will dare any odds.

“Sink me the ship, Master Gunner, sink her, split her in
twain !
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain.”

That was how, according to the late Laureate, Sir Richard Grenville bade the contest cease. Markham's hero abjured all such brevity and pertinence, as this one of the stanzas embodying his last orders (he was an unconscionable long time dying, and talking about it,) will show. Sir Richard is prone on the deck of the *Revenge*. All around Spaniards are looming. Sir Richard finds breath and opportunity to say, among many other things :—

"Sweet Maister Gunner, split our keele in twaine,
We cannot live, whom hope of life hath left,
Dying, our deaths more glorious lives retaine,
Let not our ship, of shame and foile bereft,
Unto our foemen for a prize remaine ;
Sinke her, and sinking with the *Greeke* wee'll cry,
Best not to be, or beeing soon to dye."

"He was," says Stevenson, writing, in his essay on the English admirals, of Sir Richard Grenville, "he was a noted tyrant to his crew : a dark, bullying fellow apparently ; and it is related of him that he would chew and swallow wine glasses, by way of convivial levity, till the blood ran out of his mouth."

Gervase Markham was perhaps truest poet when in the kitchen. There the inspiration denied to him when he would consciously serve the Muses flooded his being and impelled him to great achievement. From what authoritative anthology of "prose-poems" could this recipe for the compounding of an excellent sallet be omitted?—

"Take a good quantity of blancht almonds, and with your shredding knife cut them grossly ; then take as many raisins of the sun clean washt, and the stones pickt out, as many figs shred like the almonds, as many capers, twice

so many olives, and as many currants as of all the rest, clean washt, a good handfull of the small tender leaves of red sage and spinage ; mixe all these well together with good store of sugar, and lay them in the bottome of a great dish ; then put unto them vinegar and oyl, and scrape more sugar over all ; then take oranges and lemmons, and paring away the outward pills, cut them into thin slices, then with those slices cover the sallet all over, which done, take the fine thin leaf of the red cole flower, and with them cover the oranges and lemmons all over ; then over those red leaves, lay another course of old olives, and the slices of well-pickled cucumbers, together with the very inward heart of cabbage-lettuce cut into slices ; then adorn the sides of the dish, and the top of the sallet, with more slices of lemmons and oranges, and so serve it up."

What comely phrases ! Contrast with them the bald and unalluring directions to be found in a modern "Enquire Within"—such a work as Markham would have edited—and you will see how the felicities of language have passed from daily life. Alack ! what have we not lost in our search for brevity and precision ? Where now

are "the raisins of the sun," where the "very inward heart"? And the niggard accuracy of *avouirdupois* has taken the place of the generous (if vague) abundance indicated by "pretty quantity" and "good store." None the less one looks upon "Enquire Within" as a severely valuable book.

Markham's March-pane recipe is another lyric:—

"To make the best March-pane, take the best Jordan Almonds, and blanch them in warm water, then put them into a stone mortar, and with a wooden pestle beat them to pap, then take of the finest refined sugar well searst, and with it Damask Rose water, beat it to a good stiff paste, allowing almost to every Jordan Almond three spoonfulls of sugar, then when it is brought thus to a paste, lay it upon a fair Table, and strewing searst sugar under it, mould it like leven, then with a rowling-pin rowl it forth, and lay it upon wafers washed with Rose Water; then pinch it about the sides, and put it into what form you please; then strew searst sugar all over it, which done, wash it over with Rose water and sugar mixt together, for that will make the Ice; then adorn

it with comfits, gilding, or whatsoever devices you please, and so set it into a hot stove, and there bake crispy, and serve it forth."

"To make sweet water of the best kind," he directs elsewhere, "take a thousand Damask roses." A thousand damask roses! What opulence! And what a picture it calls up: the English housewife in her white sleeves, her keys at her side; the sunny morning-room; the mass of wine-dark petals on the table; laughing children running in from the rosary bringing more, more. Opulence is indeed the note under Markham's régime. Mother Earth is called upon to squander her vegetable riches; fragrant, spreading gardens are depleted to assist the flavour of a single dish. And all is legitimate, all in due order; there is no violence, no distortion. Gervase Markham could not have been less shocked than Keats himself at a plate of nightingales' tongues. We are never tempted to charge him with greed; Gervase Markham was too various a man for that—once again, too gentle. At most he was, in Dr. Kitchener's phrase, "a notable fork." Some idea of the estimation in which he held the culinary art may be gathered from the

following positive statement concerning the English housewife :—" She that is utterly ignorant therein [cookery], may not by Laws of strict Justice challenge the freedome of marriage, because indeed she can then but perform half her vow : for she may love and obey, but she cannot cherish, serve, and keep him with that true duty which is ever expected." Markham is rarely so dogmatic. For the sake of the marriage tie it is as well, perhaps, that the opinion is not generally held.

See what roots and fruits went to the perfection of the best Marrow-bone Pye, of which, despite the marrow-bone basis, a vegetarian might surely partake without sin.

"After you have mixt the crusts of the best sort for pasts, and raised the coffin in such a manner as you please ; you shall first in the bottome thereof lay a course of marrow of beef, mixt with currants ; then upon it a lay of the soals of artichokes, after they have been boyled and are divided from the thistle ; then cover them with marrow, currants, and great raisins, the stones pickt out ; then lay a course of potatoes cut in thick slices, after they have been boyled soft, and are clean pilled ; then

cover them with marrow, currants, great raisins, sugar, and cinnamon; then lay a layer of candied eringo roots mixt very thick with the slices of dates; then cover it with marrow, currants, great raisins, sugar, cinnamon, and dates, with a few Damask prunes, and so bake it; and after it is bak't, pour into it, as long as it will receive it, white wine, rosewater, sugar, and cinnamon and vinegar mixt together, and candy all the cover with rosewater and sugar only, and so set it into the oven a little, and serve it forth."

Not only in the composition of each dish is this opulence to be found, but in the multitude and variety of them on the table. Gervase Markham's instructions to the docile housewife on the ordering of a royal feast may be left where they are, but the following counsel, being addressed to "any Good man," demands publicity:—

"Now for a more humble Feast, or an ordinary proportion which any good man may keep in his Family, for the entertainment of his true and worthy friends, it must hold limitation with his provision and the season of the year; For Summer affords what Winter wants, and Winter is Master of that which Summer can

but with difficulty have. It is good then for him that intends to Feast, to set down the full number of his full dishes, that is, dishes of meat that are of substance, and not empty, or for shew ; and of these sixteen is a good proportion for one course unto one messe, as thus, for example : First, a shield of Brawn with mustard, secondly, a boyl'd Capon ; Thirdly, a boyl'd piece of beef, Fourthly, a chine of Beef roasted, Fifthly, a Neat's tongue roasted, Sixthly, a Pig roasted, Seventhly, a Chewets bak'd, Eighthly, a goose roasted, Ninthly, a swan roasted, Tenthly, a Turkey roasted, the Eleventh, a Haunch of Venison roasted, the Twelfth, a Pasty of Venison, the Thirteenth, a Kid with a pudding in the belly, the Fourteenth, an Olive-pye, the Fifteenth, a couple of Capons, the Sixteenth, a Custard or Dousets. Now to these full dishes may be added Sallets, Fricases, Quelque choses, and devised paste, as many dishes more, which make the full service no less than two-and-thirty dishes, which is as much as can conveniently stand on one Table, and in one mess ; and after this manner you may proportion both your second and third course, holding fulness in one half of the dishes, and shew in the other,

which will be both frugall in the spender, contentment to the guest, and much pleasure and delight to the beholders."

With this insight into our ancestors' appetites may we not understand more clearly the Elizabethan spirit—its breadth, optimism, radiance? Markham in the kitchen has himself something of the grand manner of the early dramatists. At a table groaning beneath such dishes, so wealthy in picturesque abundance, in essential sweetness and vigour, and withal racy of the soil, there must abide enthusiasm. Our own literature would perhaps be robuster if we could reinstate some of these old eating customs.

NOTE

Eight of the foregoing Essays were printed in the *Cornhill Magazine*. "Concerning Hampers" appeared in the *Windsor Magazine*, and "Concerning Fires" in the *Morning Post*. "Concerning Walks" and "Concerning Animals" have been collected from the *County Gentleman* and the *Globe*.

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